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THE SILVER BUGLE.

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THE

MARKED BULLET;

OR,

THE SQUAW'S REPRIVE.

A TALE OF THE EARLY OHIO SETTLEMENTS.

BY GEORGE HENRY PRENTISS.





THE

SILVER BUGLE;

OR,

THE INDIAN MAIDEN OF ST. CROIX.

BY LIEUT.-COL. HAZLETON.

AUTHOR OF "THE BORDER SPY," "PRISONER OF THE MILL," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,
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THE SILVER BUGLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

It is a lurid summer morn.

The sun, just rising o'er the eastern hills,
Is red with anger at the fearful deeds
Done since his last eve's setting. All the night
The bloodhound War has bay'd. His brazen mouth,
Frothed with gore, has licked a thousand dead,
And now in horrid surfeit of men's blood,
He dozes on the field.—G. W. WYNTER.

MINNESOTA! Pregnant with nature's gems. A State fruitful in variety, combining all that is attractive to the lover of rural beauty and wild grandeur. Thousands of limpid rills, checkering the undulating fields, and winding through deep vales, flanked by the towering mountains, lend their silvery drops to swell the broader river, the glorious Minnesota, as it dashes onward, pouring its tide into the great "Father of Waters;" while innumerable lakes reflect the loveliness by which their shores are fringed, and the blue sky at noonday, or the midnight stars, each vying with the other in their charms, to win the admiration of mankind.

The principal river, which bears the name of its own State, rises among the mountains near the western border of the State; and, gathering strength as it progresses, flows through a sparsely-settled, but beautiful and fertile, portion of Minnesota, emptying its waters into the Upper Mississippi at the city of St. Paul, the head of steam navigation, and but a short distance below the Falls of St. Anthony.

Upon the other hand, rising near Lake Superior, and coursing through Wisconsin, is another river of scarcely less note, and quite as lovely, known as the St. Croix, which also empties into the Mississippi, only a few miles below its junction with the Minnesota. Both these rivers are navigable for many miles for small craft, and an immense quantity of lumber finds

its way through their channels to the more densely-populated districts.

But a few years since, this portion of the country was occupied by the red children of the forest only; or, if occasionally a white settler was found, it usually proved to be one of those adventurous spirits who delight to dwell "far from the haunts of men." The fur traders, who frequented this section for traffic with the natives, gave such glowing accounts of the country, that emigration set in, and for a long time continued uninterrupted. The Indians were friendly, and in no manner interfered with the whites, further than occasional depredations upon their corn-fields, or the stealing of cattle and horses.

But, as the strength of the white man increased, so the hunting-grounds of the red-man contracted. This naturally created a feeling of jealousy, and, finally, of hatred; but as the aborigines were partially remunerated for their lands, and feared the "Great Father at Washington," they were cautious, and refrained from acts of violence.

There had been an intermarriage between one of the "braves" of the Sioux tribe and a beautiful squaw of the Minnesotas, which cemented a friendship between the two nations. This rather unusual event originated in the fact of the Sioux brave having saved the life of the Minnesota maiden's father. The result of this marriage was an only daughter, who was called Minneapolis. A small village near St. Anthony Falls now bears her name.

Some five years ago, the father of Minneapolis died, and, in a short time, the mother followed. Their home had been on the St. Croix river, about sixty miles above the Mississippi. After the death of her parents, Minneapolis, who was, if possible, more beautiful than her mother, was urged to return to her father's tribe, which then dwelt at the head-quarters of the Sioux nation, on the Des Moines river, near the Iowa border. But she had formed a strong attachment for the family of a white settler—an honest, noble-hearted man, surrounded by a family of more than ordinary intelligence and refinement. With them she resolved to remain, sharing alike their protection and their affection.

This family, which had emigrated from the State of New York, was among the first of Northern Wisconsin settlers. It

consisted of the father, Henry Ashby, his wife, Jane, and two daughters, who gloried in the title of "young ladies," although their ages, at the time we write, were respectively but fourteen and sixteen. Still, from their natural grace and dignity of manner, together with the superior education they possessed, their claims might justly be allowed. Another member of the Ashby family was a young man of twenty, by the name of Henry (his father's name), although he was usually called Harry. He was no less accomplished than his sisters, Grace and Carro, in all that pertained to society's exactions; but, during his residence at his new forest home, he had become an expert in a wildwood education. Besides these, the family circle was blessed with the presence of a bright-eyed boy of ten, and a fair-haired girl of six.

As soon as Minneapolis had been regularly installed as one of the family, she commenced a course of study, under the instruction of the young ladies, which was intended to fit her for the society of the great and gay world. The education of the girl was rapid, yet she clung, with much affection and enthusiasm to many of her earlier associations, and passed much of her time upon the St. Croix, in a beautiful canoe, which she could handle with dexterity, or in wandering among the mountains, bounding from rock to rock, and making the forest echo with her song and merry laugh. Many attempts had been made to capture the maiden by her relatives of the Sioux tribe, but young Harry Ashby was almost always by her side or near her, and but few would venture in a hostile way within range of his rifle. Besides, the Minnesota nation was pleased with the arrangement made between the hunter's family and Minneapolis, and any violence upon the part of the Sioux might involve the tribes in difficulty, which it was policy to avoid.

Soon after the breaking out of the great rebellion in 1861, and the commencement of hostilities between the northern and southern sections of the United States, it began to be whispered about that the Sioux nation was preparing to make war upon the white settlers throughout middle Minnesota, and that this war would be extended to the State borders, upon the Mississippi, if the chiefs deemed it prudent. The Indians were daily committing depredations, and becoming bolder, but few acts

of actual violence were committed until the winter of 1861 and 1862.

It was the middle of June, 1862. The Indian war had commenced in all its fury. The inhabitants were either flying for safety to St. Paul, and other cities along the Mississippi, or arming themselves for defense. Block-houses were built, and scarce a village but had its night patrol and its pickets, to guard against sudden surprise. There were no troops in the State—the nearest point where any number were stationed being Fort Dodge, in Iowa, upon the Des Moines river. It was at a distance remote from this fort that the Indians determined to strike.

Information had reached the small settlement upon the St. Croix, where the Ashby family resided, that a Sioux "brave" known as the "bloody tomahawk," but by name Conanchet, was upon that river with one hundred warriors, and that he had sworn vengeance against the Ashbys on account of the girl Minneapolis, whom he intended to secure, and send to the tribe of her father, for the purpose of making her his wife. This intelligence, of course, spread consternation throughout the little village, and every preparation was made to receive the malignant foe. Women and children took refuge in the block-house, upon the river's bank, and provisions were conveyed thither in large quantities, preparatory for a siege. Water was plentifully supplied by a ditch which communicated with the river, only a few feet from the lower room of the block-house. On three sides this place of refuge was guarded by an outer work, formed of palisades, or large upright pieces of timber, which had been set firmly in the ground. This outer work was about twenty feet in height. Near the top of this breastwork, and upon the inside, was a platform, which was reached with ladders. This platform was built for the purpose of defense, should any one attempt to scale the works from the outside. The block-house was formed of logs. The lower, or ground room, about sixty feet square, was intended for the women, children, aged and sick, who were not expected to take part in the anticipated bloody fray. It was, also, well stored with provisions and necessaries of comfort.

The second story, which was something smaller than the first, was about forty feet square, with a kind of balcony

around the entire building, long enough to contain a file of mountain marksmen, in case the outer work should be taken. This room was prepared expressly for the defenders of their homes, and was pierced in every direction for musketry. Above this there was still another room, or kind of tower, of much smaller dimensions. It was about five feet square, and was more particularly a watch station. In this were stationed four men, who were relieved by turns, who watched the surrounding country with great vigilance.

The family of the Ashbys were all present on the evening of the 12th of June, with the exception of Minneapolis and Harry.

It was a night of horror. The wind moaned and wailed a dismal song, while the thunder bellowed and echoed over the rugged hills, as if, in its madness, it would rend the earth. The lightning flashes were almost incessant; and the rushing wind and driving rain lent terror to the hour. Ashby was seated in the lower room of the settlers' refuge.

"I fear for our child Minnie," said Mr. Ashby. "She is wayward but good. And now that danger hovers over us, I think she is doubly devoted. She is absent for our good, no doubt, but I fear harm will come to her."

His tone was very grave and not without feeling.

Among those who had taken refuge in the house, was an unmarried lady, of about forty-eight years of age. Her character by no means differed from that of others who had reached her years without condescending to adopt the name of one of the "sterner sex." She gloried in the name of *Miss Jerusha Peatt*.

"I don't like this amalgamation of Indian and white folks, Mr. Ashby," said Miss Peatt. "It has brought this trouble upon us. If you had not taken that Indian minx into your family, the savages would never have ventured so far from their homes. Oh, my! I can almost fancy their bloody scalping-knives at my throat, demanding, in stentorian tones, the yielding up of my life to appease their savage natures, and to save you all from the horrors of the fate you have justly brought upon yourselves. Oh, why did I ever leave my rural abode in Massachusetts, and consent to enlighten the heathenians of this part of the country by my presence, while dear ones are fighting for me at home!"

Ashby made no reply, but gazed upon the speaker with something of contempt in his sad countenance.

At this instant a bolt of lightning struck a large tree near the block-house, and shook it to its very foundation. The maiden, Peatt, with a shriek of terror, threw herself upon the ground, and gave vent to the most pitiful moans. As she lay prostrate, little Charley Ashby, seizing one of the hay-forks which had been brought into the block-house as a weapon of defense, drove the prongs over the ankle of the terrified female, thus fastening her to the earth. On attempting to move, and finding herself fast, she set up a series of howlings which made the woods ring again.

"Oh, murder! Help! help! The savages! Oh, save me!"

Charley gave a regular Indian war-whoop, whereupon Miss Peatt actually went into hysterics. Mr. Ashby interfered for the maiden's relief, by sending Charley into another part of the building; but it was some time before he could reassure the lady of her bodily safety and thus secure her silence.

The midnight hour arrived. The watchers in the tower had just been relieved, and although Minneapolis—or Minnie as she was called—was still absent, to the great anxiety of all, the beleaguered community laid themselves down to rest—the guard in the watch-tower alone being on the alert. Harry Ashby had returned, but knew nothing of Minnie, farther than the fact that, just before darkness set in, he had seen her at a distance, bounding forward toward a point of rocks known as "Ashby's Look-out." He had attempted to follow her, but, finding no farther trace, had returned, hoping to meet her at the fort. Yet she came not, and the fears of the wisest intensified with every hour of her unaccountable absence.

The storm increased.

Suddenly there was an unusual commotion in the watch-tower. Mr. Ashby, springing to his feet, demanded the cause. The answer came:

"It is a sound never before heard in these parts to my knowledge—something like the *blast of a bugle*. Whether it is an *hundred* bugles, or *one* bugle and its *hundred* echoes, I can not tell."

Mr. Ashby ascended to the tower and listened. At length he said :

"It is very remarkable and mysterious. I have never heard these sounds before. An approaching enemy certainly would not thus announce himself. It must be a warning signal, although by whom I can not divine."

"It comes from the 'Look-out,' Squire," said a queer-looking specimen of humanity—a person very much deformed both in body and feature. There was an immense hump upon his back ; his arms were very long, reaching nearly to the ground, and his face was marked by a number of deep scars, bearing the appearance of repeated blows from a red-hot iron bar.

"The Look-out stands upon the bend in the river, and any person watching there can see a long distance below. Do you think, Mr. Hill," continued Ashby, "that Conanchet will come so near the fort in canoes, or that he will leave them below concealed in the wood, and make his attack entirely by land?"

"Both, Squire ; that is, he will probably send one-half of his men by water, and the other portion he will bring around to the rear."

"You are much better acquainted with their mode of fighting than myself," replied Ashby, "and I shall rely to some extent upon your judgment."

"I am ! Oh, yes, I *am* familiar with their mode," said Hill, with bitterness, as he pointed to the hump upon his back, and the terrible marks across his face ; "I owe them this—this mountain on my back, and these scars. But I will repay them yet—ay, and with interest, too ! And perhaps the time for such payment has arrived now. God grant that it has ! My very soul cries for the sacrifice of a blood-offering upon the altar of my murdered ones." His tone was fierce, but solemn as that of a prophet. All stood in awe of his blazing eyes and his terrible, all-absorbing, but not violent passion.

"Was it not Conanchet who inflicted this terrible torture upon you?"

"Ah, Conanchet ! That was the name. And he was a Sioux brave. But I am informed that the Conanche now marching against us is a young man. If so, he must be the

son. But, it's all the same—all the same!" he cried, fiercely, as he beat upon his breast, which heaved violently in the intensity of his sudden excitement.

"Would you seek vengeance upon the son for the crimes of his father?" asked Ashby.

"Ay, but I would. That's now *my* gospel doctrine."

"But it strikes me it is not a Christian one."

"Mr. Ashby, do I *look* like a Christian? Do I look like any thing *human*, even? Don't I look more like a foul imp—a Caliban? You know it, and I know it, and a monster I will be so far as the red-skins have dealings with me. They have made me a demon, and they shall feel my rule!"

"Mr. Hill, you brood too much over your deformity. You are among friends who appreciate your worth, and will strive to alleviate your sorrows."

"And why should I not brood over my deformity? There was a time when I stood erect in God's own image. Look at me now! I am bowed and bent down with this burden upon my back so that I am forced to keep my eyes fixed upon the earth, which seems to shrink when its gaze meets mine! And the consolation I receive for this misfortune is—oh, I understand it well—is *pity*! Does any living being love me? Does any kind heart caress me, or any soft voice give utterance to words of endearment? No! Even my child—my little Julia—the only one saved on that terrible night, after she became old enough to be observing, would shrink, screaming, from my embrace! That nearly killed me! Oh, God! that a father should be so repulsive in appearance that his own child should shrink in terror from him. But, thank God, she is dead now."

"You thank God for that!"

"I do! If it had pleased the All-Wise to have taken me, I should have preferred it. But, in some way I would have her spared the pain of gazing upon such a father."

"Mr. Hill," said Ashby, "that some great misfortune has befallen you we are well aware; and that it was in connection with the Sioux Indians we also know. But the particulars I have never learned. If not too painful, I should be glad to hear from your own lips the story of your sufferings."

"You shall have a brief sketch of them, Mr. Ashby. But

I am inclined to think it will necessarily be brief, for if the red-skins are near us, they won't lose the advantage such a fight as this gives them. So I will proceed at once.

"It was in the year 1846 that I was induced to emigrate to the wilds of Wisconsin, with my family. I settled upon the St. Croix river, about forty miles from its mouth and intersection with the Mississippi. The cause of my emigration was the loss of fortune, brought about by over-confidence in pretended friends. I left Philadelphia, my former home, with a heavy heart. But I had an interesting family, to whom I was devotedly attached. It consisted of my wife, a daughter of sixteen, a son of ten, and a child of two years.

"We arrived in due time, and I selected the spot now known as 'Bloody Valley' for our home. There was a space of some thirty acres upon which there was no timber, and I found little trouble, after first erecting a dwelling of logs, in getting in my grain, and such other articles as would be required for family use during the coming winter. I began to feel quite contented and happy. For three seasons my harvest had been abundant, while my live stock had increased rapidly. As for fish and deer, the St. Croix and the adjoining forest gave us a plentiful supply. We had almost ceased to regret our city home, amid the many comforts and beauties by which we were surrounded.

"I soon observed that our prosperity was not unnoticed, and that it excited, at least, the envy of the Indians, who frequently visited us while upon their hunting excursions. At length they began their depredations. Numbers of our cattle, horses and fowls were stolen; but I was powerless, and determined to submit quietly. Not so with my son, who was then thirteen years of age. Without my knowledge, he secreted himself, and while an Indian was in the act of taking a horse from my stable, he shot the thief through the heart.

"The Indian belonged to the Sioux tribe, and was a near relative of Conquahet, a powerful brave. This man demanded release. I informed him that the deed had been committed by my son, a thoughtless boy, and entirely without my knowledge. The Indians then demanded that the boy should be given over for torture. This I refused. They then retired, telling me it was their intention to consult with their chief

but should return at daylight to inform me of his decision in the matter. I felt that I must prepare for the worst. I arranged my dwelling in the best possible shape for defence, but had little hope of successfully contending with my aggressors. Assistance could not be procured for several days, the nearest neighbor resided nearly fifteen miles distant.

"Morning came. Just as the sun was rising, a party of about thirty savages emerged from the woods, and came directly across the open field to my house. They approached the door with great caution, evidently expecting a warm reception. I measured my chances for success, and my rifle, which I had brought to bear upon the leader, was lowered.

"What are your terms by which a settlement can be effected?" I asked.

"That you send the chief six horses, deliver the boy up for torture, and give the pale maiden to be the squaw of Conanchet."

"This reply froze my very blood. I turned my gaze upon my wife. She had fallen upon her knees, and was praying. I looked at my boy. He stood in an attitude of defiance, while awaiting my answer. My little girl, then five years old, stood by her mother in silent wonder. But my daughter—she who was asked as the wife of the savage—then nineteen, and beautiful as a lily, stood near me with terrified eyes and trembling form. One rapid glance was sufficient to impress this picture on my heart and brain, eternally. I raised my rifle, and, taking a deadly aim through a port hole, I cried:

"Will you be content if I will give you my house, my barn, my horses, cattle, every thing I have?"

"No," was the answer; "we have them all now."

"My rifle sent forth a stream of fire, and, with a yell, an Indian leaped into the air, and fell to the earth, dead. My son, who had been watching my movements, also fired, and a second savage bit the dust. They left the door, and withdrew to the side of the house. I had not sufficient time to pierce the logs for rifles, excepting at three different points near the door. We reloaded our pieces quickly as possible, and prepared for further action. We had not long to wait. The door was violently assaulted with a heavy piece of timber, but it refused to yield, and two more of the savages fell

before our rifles. This incited the others. With the most unwarlike yells they danced around us for a while, and then all became silent. Soon, however, I heard the crackling of flames. The roof was on fire, as was the house in several other places. I began now to prepare for a most desperate encounter. I thought it most likely if any one of my family was spared by the savages, it would be my eldest daughter. I therefore took from the cradle my little infant, and gave it into her charge. I hoped, as the flames progressed, some opening would be formed through which I could bring my rifle to bear upon the savages. But they carefully avoided this. At last the room became so intensely hot that it was impossible longer to remain in it. I took my dear wife in my arms, and bade her a last farewell. I caressed my weeping daughter, committing her to the care of heaven, and, bidding each a sad good-by, I proceeded to open the door.

The boy was the first to spring into the open air. He was confronted by the relentless foe. But his rifle again was sure, and I saw another savage fall. I sprang forth, rifle in hand. It did its work well. I drew my knife, and fought as only a man can fight who does so for his own life, and the lives of those he loves. I heard their shrieks of agony—heard the yells of triumph—I saw the darting flames; but I could not long stand against such odds. I felt a sharp pang—a giddiness—and all was dark.

How long I remained in this condition I know not, but when I recovered I found myself in an Indian village. I ascertained that I could not be many miles from my former residence. A river was flowing along near the village, but it was somewhat broader than the St. Croix at 'Bloody Valley,' and so I concluded that I must be below that point. I sought information of the chief with regard to my family, but he was silent and morose.

"I had been in the Indian village nearly two weeks after my return to civilization, and the wound, which was upon my head, had begun to heal, and my strength had quite returned. One day I saw an unusual preparation in the village—something denoting a holiday. Warriors appeared in their gayest costumes, with an extra coating of paint, and their faces adorned themselves in their most picturesque style.

I soon learned that a prisoner was to 'run the gauntlet,' and I began to fear that I might have some immediate connection in the games of that day, although I had not the slightest knowledge as to what the terror of 'running the gauntlet' might signify.

"It was about nine o'clock in the morning that I observed two lines forming to the right of the village. These two lines faced inward, and were about six feet apart, leaving a street of that width between the ranks. I observed that these lines were made up of warriors, old men, old and young women, and children, and that in a line behind each rank were blazing fires. On some of these, iron pokers or rods were heating, and upon others were kettles with water boiling. Men were armed with whips, knives, clubs, stones, and almost every variety of weapon. It almost froze my blood as I gazed upon this assemblage, but I had no idea what all this preparation meant.

"At last I was aroused from my wonder, by the approach of four powerful Indians, who threw aside the thongs which bound me, and dragged me toward the line. I did not speak, but arriving at the required point, I saw a street, between this line, or rather two lines of savages, which appeared to me nearly a mile in length.

"'You must run,' said one of my guards.

"I had read, in our earlier Indian history, descriptions of 'gauntlet running,' but now I saw the reality before me, although I had always thought it only as a romance. I knew that I must run *through* that line, that every attempt would be made to *kill* me by the thousands assembled, and that, if my life was spared, it would depend entirely on my nimbleness of feet and my dexterity in dodging. And the universal law which governs the Indian race, that a prisoner, if he has courage sufficient to make the attempt, and succeeds in passing their 'gauntlet line,' must go free, gave me hope, resolution, strength. I determined to venture. I did not hesitate because I lacked courage, but I was, at first, disheartened. Then came the thought—'What if some of your family were still alive?' This acted like magic. Why should I live if they were all gone? Why should I fear any thing, if they were all gone? And if even one of my children was alive, I was

reason for the desperate run to be made with all my power.

"Go—go!" yelled the Indian guard.

"I sprung like lightning into the path. Many blows were leveled at my head, but with dexterity I avoided them. I had passed two-thirds of the line, and was already congratulating myself on my escape, when I was struck in the face by a fiery substance, which made me reel and stagger to the earth. In an instant I was surrounded by fire, but this only served to remind me of my own home, and of the fate awaiting me, and, springing to my feet, I dashed onward. Many blows were inflicted upon me with the instruments held in the hands of the savages. Hot iron bars came in contact with my body and face, scalding water was thrown upon me, and just as I was about to emerge from the line, I fell to the ground, bleeding at every pore, and blistered from head to foot.

"I was then taken back to my prison. Oh, what agony filled my soul when I was informed that if I had run ten yards farther, the 'gauntlet' would have been passed, and I would have been free! But now I was to be subjected to such other torture as the chief might decide upon, and that without even waiting for my wounds to heal.

"From my prison I saw a council of savages assemble. As a strong guard remained with me, I judged there would be immediate action taken in my case. It was not long before the crowd, which had partially dispersed, began to gather again, and I was brought forth. I had given up in despair, and gave but little heed to their preparations. Besides, I was suffering so intensely from my wounds, that I actually longed for death to relieve me.

"I could not walk, and was dragged forward and placed upon the back of a horse. For the first time I opened my eyes, and comprehended at a glance what I had now to endure. The fate of Mazeppa, the Tartar prince and lover, was before me! I was to be tied upon the back of a wild horse, which would be driven tearing through the forest. The thongs which bound me to the animal cut my already lacerated flesh, as he reared and plunged in his effort to remove the burden upon him, and free himself from the iron grasp of those who held him. Dry pine-knots were so attached to the poor beast

as to be set on fire. Every thing thus prepared, the fire was set loose.

"With shrieks of agony, almost human in their tones, the animal dashed through the forest, while the savages followed with exulting yells, and sent arrows after their victims, some of which struck the frantic steed, while others pierced my flesh.

"I became unconscious. When my reason returned, I found myself in the dwelling of one of my neighbors. He had found me by chance, after the horse had fallen dead. Better if I, too, had died! In his mad course through the forest, I had been dashed against the overhanging branches. This hump is the result of that ride. My back was broken. And yet I found what I hoped would prove a comfort to me. This neighbor had discovered and buried the body of my wife, my daughter and my son. Jennie, the little girl of five, was not found among the slain, and it was supposed she had been consumed by the flames. But my little infant was saved and was with me.

"Oh, how bright were my anticipations of future happiness with this child, when I should recover! For two years I did not leave my room, and scarcely my bed. When I did emerge, I was the hideous monster you now behold. I made every effort during my confinement, as my little one grew older, to accustom her to the sight of her father, but her aversion appeared rather to increase than diminish. Sometimes I would sing to her the songs her mother used to sing. To these she would listen, and turn toward me with something like affection in her gaze, but then with a shudder she would turn away again. This almost killed me. At last she died. This completed my earthly misery. I have lived since that time only for revenge. And *I will have it!* I have already sent death and terror into their haunts. They have seen me. They think me a demon! They fear this horrible monster—their own work! But I have been indolent. I have spared the red fiends from the fear that they would wreak their vengeance upon the innocent. But now that war with them has commenced they shall feel my presence among them. Their thirst for blood shall be quite satisfied. And this Comanche comes! I will meet him first."

Again the bugle blast was heard, and Mr. Ashby, proceeding to the room below, stepped out upon the balcony, and endeavored, by the aid of the vivid lightning's flash, to ascertain if an enemy was visible at any point.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT'S WORK.

THE night was intensely dark, although the glare of the red lightning, which, for a time, had been almost incessant, rendered any object upon the river, or in the open space, easily distinguished for some distance from the point where Mr. Ashby was standing. But the fury of the storm at length abated, and the lightning flashed only at long intervals, as Mr. Ashby emerged from the second room, and took his position upon the platform. He gazed earnestly down the river, and over the open fields into the forest beyond. Ere long, something attracted his attention, and he bent forward, listening.

"Do you see or hear any thing?" asked Hill.

"I hear a sound like the dipping of oars, although it is quite indistinct. But I see nothing," answered Ashby.

"Then you are short-sighted."

"What do you see?"

"Step inside, quick!"

At the same instant Hill discharged his rifle.

Ashby was about to ask an explanation, when he felt a sharp twinge in the shoulder. He also saw the flash and heard the report of a rifle from the opposite bank of the river. Again cautioned by Hill not to expose himself so recklessly, he stepped within the fort.

Upon examination, it was found that Ashby had received a slight flesh wound in the shoulder; not of sufficient importance, however, to give him any serious inconvenience.

"That red devil came very near giving you the finishing touch," said Hill. "If that flash of lightning had been a trifle

brighter, all would be over with you now. The red-skins seldom miss their mark."

"That shot came from the opposite shore, did it not?" asked Ashby.

"It did. I just discovered the fellow as he leveled his rifle, and so I blazed away. But I think I didn't touch him."

"Did you see him distinctly?"

"I saw a red-skin darting his canoe under the overhanging bushes on the other side. But the flash was so sudden and dull, that I had to fire by guess."

"Was he alone?"

"I saw no one near him on the water, but you may make up your mind there are plenty of them near at hand. Boldly, if you will look sharp, you will see about forty or fifty canoes, filled with Indians, hugging the shores on both sides the river, only about half a mile below. They are peering very cautiously toward us."

This was indeed true.

"Their numbers can not be very great, or they would advance more boldly," said Ashby.

"You appear to know very little of the Indian character, Mr. Ashby," replied Hill. "Why, sir, if their numbers were small, they *would* advance boldly—that is, until they came within the range of our rifles. There is a large number of them, depend upon it, and they will cover their approach as much as possible, in order to surprise us. But hark! There is that bugle again. Its notes are strangely wild. And see! There, high up on the 'Look-out,' is a flame darting up. It must be a signal-fire."

"It is possible a bolt of lightning has stricken a dry tree, and set it on fire."

"But those sounds come from the same spot. I tell you, Ashby, we have friends near, and those signals are to apprise us of their approach."

"*Curse that she-devil!*"

"Did you hear that?" whispered Hill, as he sprang forward and grasped Ashby by the arm.

"I heard nothing very strange. What did you hear?"

"Speak low! Did you not hear a voice exclaim, '*Curse that she-devil!*'?"

"I heard an exclamation, it is true, but I gave it no heed, supposing that it came from the lower room."

"You must be more watchful. I distinctly heard the words and voice. And the speaker is near the water, on the *outside* of the fort."

"Shall I challenge him?"

"By no means. Watch very closely. If I am not much mistaken in that voice, it was Jim Archer's, the renegade."

"I have heard of him."

"And who has not? He is the blackest villain outside of the grave, or inside either, for the matter of that. Indeed, I really think his Satanic majesty will abdicate in Archer's favor the moment he goes below, he is so much superior in villainy and cunning. If that is Archer—hark!"

"Quick—quick! Open the door and admit the poor creature! She will be torn in pieces!" cried Ashby.

"Stop—stop! Let no one move!" yelled Hill. "Whoever touches that door dies upon the instant!" and the humpback raised his rifle, and sprung to the head of the stairs, where he could command the door of the lower room.

The cause of this extraordinary scene was that, at that instant, a terrible noise was heard just without the door. It appeared from the sounds as if a powerful and ferocious dog had attacked, in the most violent manner, a female, who was screaming in her agony and fright, and begging to be admitted.

The eyes of Ashby flashed with indignation, as he gazed upon Hill. But the latter had already sprung into the lower room, and placed his back firmly against the door, while he held his rifle for immediate use. Several times he had attempted to speak, but the maiden Peatt had set up such a series of pitiful shrieks, that he could not be heard.

The horrible howling of the dog had now become a low growl, while the cries of the female had gradually died away in a gurgling sound, like one just struggling between life and death with strangulation.

"For God's sake, Hill, what do you mean? The Indians are not here yet, and are you so great a coward that you will let that poor woman die, sooner than open the door?" cried Ashby.

"Make that she-fool stop her howling, so that I can be heard, and then I will explain," replied Hill.

"*Me* a fool!" yelled Miss Peatt, as she sprung forward and confronted Hill. "*Me* a she-fool! Oh, you horrible, ugly, viperous, hideous monster!"

"Silence, you pestilence!" yelled Hill, "or I will make your ugly face uglier."

"I won't be silent!" and, by the increased howlings which she again set up, it was evident she meant just what she said.

Charley Ashby delighted in tormenting the old maid, and lost no opportunity in doing so. He was not absent upon the present occasion.

"I'll silence her!" he cried.

He had approached with a bucket of water from the ditch connecting the river and lower room. He had dipped to the bottom of the ditch, and had taken a considerable quantity of mud and sand with the water.

"I'll silence her!" and in an instant he dashed the contents of the pail full in the face of the shrieking maiden.

Unfortunately for Miss Peatt, and fortunately for the remainder of the company, she happened to have her mouth open just at that instant, giving utterance to one of her dialect notes. The natural consequence was that the cavity was filled with mud and water, and for some moments it was a question of doubt as to which was in the greatest danger of strangulation—poor Peatt or the female outside the door. But after a time she regained her breath, and calling down imprecations upon those who would stand by and see a delicate female thus abused, she seated herself in the furthest extremity of the room, and gave vent to violent sobs.

The noise outside had nearly ceased.

"Now will you explain why you refuse to open that door?" asked Ashby.

"Why *should* I open it?" asked Hill.

"Because we could have saved that female from the terrible death she must now die."

"You suppose she has been attacked by a dog?"

"*Suppose* so! I *know* so."

"And you would have opened the door?"

"Certainly I would."

"Whose dog do you presume that to be?"

"Perhaps it belongs to one of the savages."

"No. It is one of the savages in person."

"How?"

"I tell you, Ashby, there is no dog outside the door, except that dog Archer, and the villainous red-devils with him."

"I do not understand."

"Then you must not attempt to control. You would have opened that door. Why? Because you *thought* a female was in trouble, and you might save her. I would have done the same to serve a suffering fellow-creature, even if a hundred dogs were the enemies I should meet. But this was only a stratagem on the part of that renegade, Jim Archer. It was that man who made the howlings and the shriekings—the one imitating a dog and the other a female. If you had opened that door, there would now remain alive only one person of all who are still safe within this fort."

"I understand."

"You don't understand all, Mr. Ashby."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you recollect a man who came to this part of the world some two years ago, and called himself Phil. Duval?"

"Oh, very well I remember him."

"Is the recollection pleasant?"

"Oh, don't speak of him. He made an attempt to steal my daughter Grace, and I even carried her to the mountains. And but for the aid of friends I should have lost her forever."

"She was then but fourteen years of age. She is sixteen now, and much more beautiful than then?"

"Ah," responded Ashby, "she is beautiful! Beautiful in mind—beautiful in all those charming virtues which elevate the female character almost to the angelic standard. I sometimes think she ought to be an angel, and almost fear she soon will be; she is so delicate, so fairy-like, so heavenly; I fear she will not remain long with us, to bless us with her presence."

"If you had opened that door she would now be in the hands of that villain, Phil. Duval, and her father would be no more."

"What do you mean?"

"When Duval found himself foiled in the attempt to abduct Miss Gracie, two years ago, he swore the most horrible oath, that, before that swelling bud of innocence had burst into the full-blossomed rose, *he'd* pluck it from the parent stem, and, placing it upon his heart, would sap its fragrance till its withered leaves no longer pleased, and then cast it aside for all the world to trample on."

Mr. Ashby bowed himself, and his breast heaved.

Grace, the eldest daughter of Mr. Ashby, had heard the conversation. Approaching her father, and placing her soft arms around him, she exclaimed:

"My dear father, let not the threats of that bad man disturb you. I am safe, and here are many friends who will protect me."

"Bless you, and may Heaven also lend its protecting aid, my darling child!" replied Mr. Ashby, in deep emotion.

"But what has the present circumstances to do with my sister?" asked Harry Ashby.

Hill turned his gaze upon Harry and his sister, and then upon the father and the remaining friends.

"Mr. Harry," said Hill, "you must pardon me, but your father and myself were holding a war council. I must ask you to take your sister and retire to the opposite side of the room."

This was instantly done.

"And now," said Ashby, "let me repeat the question of my son. What has the present circumstance to do with my daughter Grace?"

"Why, simply this: Phil. Duval and Jim Archer, the renegade, are one and the same person."

"And it is Duval who has sought to gain entrance here by that stratagem?"

"No other."

"Then he is not *alone* outside?"

"No. Do you hear that? Quick! To the platform on the palisades. Let four men remain in the watch-tower, eight in the second room, and all the rest follow me to the platform. Don't waste a shot."

These commands had been given from the fact that the

firing had already commenced, and from its briskness it was evident that those already defending the palisades must receive instant support or be overcome by the force of numbers concentrated against them.

Without awaiting further orders, about twenty men leaped up the ladders, each armed with his faithful rifle, and an ax, or some such weapon, for beating back the foe. But the fight had begun with a fury little anticipated by those within. Indian after Indian reached the top of the wall, and, by a vigorous blow, dealt by a powerful arm, was hurled back, only giving forth the death-yell to tell the story of his fate.

For several hours the battle raged. At length the fighting became less terrible; still the defenders kept their posts.

"Let water be brought," said Hill. "Concentrate all the men on the front side, and be sure to let no one remain near me."

"Why not?"

"Don't ask, only do as I say. Get all the water you can upon the front side. The miscreants are preparing now to burn us out."

"And what do you intend doing?" asked Ashby.

"Blow some of them to their last home!" replied Hill.

Hill entered the fort, but soon returned with a small keg. He ascended to the platform.

"What have you there?" asked Ashby.

"Only a small bomb-shell. I know theseimps of hell are fond of fire, and so I have provided them with a dose. This keg is about one-half full of blasting powder, and thoroughly mixed with it are nails, iron slugs and pebbles. I am going to drop this little thing close to the palisades on the outside. When the flames are once well under way, I should not be surprised if the cut-throats heard a thimbling about their ears they little expect. Now just keep away from this side, and I'll teach them a lesson that will cause them to hesitate before they attempt the fire game upon us again. Take care of yourselves, for here they come with their brands."

Almost the first rule which made up the settlement were in flames, and with the most terrific yells the savages came bounding toward the fort. They had already lost over thirty of their number; those remaining were thoroughly

maddened with rage. So well had the besieged managed the fight, that not one was killed, and but few were wounded.

Hill dropped the keg as closely as possible to the wall, and then descended the ladder.

It was but a few moments before a bright light told the story that the work had commenced. Higher and higher rose the flames, until the curling of a thousand forked tongues could be distinctly seen above the wall.

Upon a sudden there was a terrible explosion, a shaking of the fort's foundation, a series of horrible shrieks of agony, and yells of madness, stifled moans and bitter curses, a hasty trampling of feet, and a splashing in the water. As the dense smoke cleared away, Hill ascended to the top of the wall, and peered over. It was a dreadful sight which met his gaze. Strewed upon the ground were the mangled forms of many of the assailants. Those unhurt had withdrawn to a considerable distance, and appeared to be holding a council.

At this moment there was another sound which attracted the attention of the defenders. It was the voice of Miss Pratt, who had recommenced her howlings.

"Oh, help—murder! I'm caught! *She's* caught! The beast is here! Oh, help, or we shall all be murdered! Oh—oh—oh!"

"It is not possible any thing can be wrong within?" said Ashby, addressing Hill.

"Oh, no; certainly not. It is only that woman, who has been so frightened at the explosion that she found it impossible to contain herself any longer."

"But her shrieks are so fearful, and others are joining with her. I'll just step in and quiet them."

"No, they are simply frightened. And look! You will be needed here. The red-skins are coming toward us now in swarms."

This was true. The party had apparently been reinforced, and now numbered nearly a hundred.

"There! there is that *bugle* again; and this time it is nearer—close to the edge of the wood. And there are shouts. It is not the Indian yell, but that of friends. Help is near. But see! A party of savages have sprung into the river, and are swimming toward the fort. The *water-ditch*! They may

have found that. Let four men be ready to help me in defending it if they attempt to enter. From the inside we can keep back hundreds."

The cries within the fort still continued, and Mr. Ashby exclaimed:

"Something ~~must~~ be wrong within. Perhaps some one has already entered by the ditch."

Mr. Ashby entered the fort, but the confusion was so great that he could get no information further than the fact that a dark form had risen from the water, seized Miss Peatt, thrown her violently to the ground, and, again springing into the water, had as quickly disappeared.

Hill had been watching from the wall, but he now appeared at the door, and said, in a low tone, to Ashby:

"Get all the women and children in the room above. Quick. We shall have sharp work here in a moment, but it will be short. Help is close at hand."

Before this could be done, a dark form appeared in the water, and sprang into the apartment. Another and another followed. It was almost entirely dark, but Ashby and Hill fought well, and, as fast as each Indian made his appearance, he did so only to die. But the fact of the attack having been made by the ditch soon became known to those on the outer wall, and there was a general rush made for the spot, each anxious to render the necessary assistance. This was an unfortunate movement. The Indians probably had anticipated this, and, taking advantage of the situation, they began scaling the wall. Nearly fifty had gained the inclosure before it was discovered. Hill was the first to ascertain the fact, and he made every effort so to dispose his men as to meet the foe, but the confusion which resulted from their being intermixed with the frightened women and children, who were running in every direction, and shrieking with terror, prevented, to a great extent, the accomplishment of his purpose.

The Indians now rushed in, and an indiscriminate slaughter began. Again the bugle-blast was heard, and this time it was directly under the outer wall. Hill sprang to the door and threw it open. In an instant the fort was filled with armed men, and the savages were quickly overpowered. Many of them made their escape in the darkness; others were killed

or badly wounded, while the balance were firmly secured within the inclosure.

Then came another heart-rending task. Lights must be procured, and an examination must be made. Who was dead? Who was living? Each heart beat anxiously, but each feared to call upon the name of loved ones, lest silence gave the answer most feared.

Oh, the suspense of such a moment! Who could fathom each heart's emotion?

CHAPTER III.

THE SILVER BUGLE.

It was a moment of anguish for all. Anguish of mind and body. Strong men groaned as the picture of the mangled form of the one most dear, was presented before their mind's eye, and strong men groaned from intense bodily suffering where the knife and tomahawk had not quite finished its work, and men once strong groaned no more, suffered no more, were strong no more. Mothers and wives, sisters and children, wept and moaned; but many there were who never would weep more. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives, children and friends, all were among the dead, dying or wounded.

It was a thankless task, but it must be done. Him, perhaps, more than any one present, felt the true force of the blow which had fallen upon so many hearts, and he felt deeply for the sorrow of the living. He soon procured half a dozen blazing torches, and the room was brightly illuminated. It was a ghastly picture. A form, pale and trembling, would raise itself from the earth, and give utterance to a name beloved, and when the answer came, "here," each, with a bound, would spring to the other's arms, and sob, or pray in broken tones. But when the answer came not, then the wail of deepest anguish would well up—that unmitigated sound which tells of broken hearts and desolated homes.

The examination was concluded. The dead were ranged

in rows for burial, and the wounded cared for. Mr. Ashby was among the latter. He had received a blow upon the forehead with some sharp instrument, and for some time had been insensible, but soon recovered. His beloved wife was among the slain. Miss Peatt was mortally wounded. She was conscious, but it was with great difficulty that she could speak.

Ashby raised his eyes to those of his children, and asked:

"Am I to live and learn that she, my faithful wife, your mother, is no more?"

"Father," sobbed Harry, "I have no more a mother!"

"And my children—are they all here?"

"All. Yet stop! Grace is neither among the *dead* nor *wounded*! Where is she?"

Search was at once instituted, but she was no where to be found. At length one of the party exclaimed:

"Look here. Here is her hat caught fast to a nail in this board. She must have attempted to creep through the ditch, and in passing under this board from the ditch to the river outside, her hat must have caught."

"Then she is drowned!" groaned the father.

Miss Peatt made an effort to speak. Hill bent close to her, and then turning to Ashby, he said:

"Mr. Ashby, when Miss Peatt commenced her shrieks, I thought it was from fright, and gave little heed to her. She now tells me that while we were on the outer wall, a form suddenly appeared in that ditch, and sprung into the room. She was, at the time, seated next to Miss Grace. She was rudely hurled to the ground, and the person seizing Miss Grace, dragged her into the water, and out through the opening."

"She is, then, in the hands of that villain, Phil. Duval?" cried Ashby. "Oh, my child, what will be thy fate? Who will rescue her?"

"If she lives, I will!"

The speaker was a young man, scarcely twenty years of age in appearance. His form was light, as, also, were his complexion and hair. His eyes were of the deepest blue. His entire appearance indicated a person of any thing else than that of a man of marked character and courage. Yet, as he spoke, his eyes flashed with excitement, and he clutched his sword-hilt with determination.

"I will save your daughter, if she yet lives, for I—I—"

"You love her!" added Mr. Ashby, as he extended his hand to the speaker. "But oh! you can not feel a father's love. But, Mr. Lindell, or, as I see by your dress, Lieutenant Lindell, I do trust you will make every effort to bring me back my child. You met her one year ago, and have not seen her since. At that time I only requested that you both—as you were so young—should ascertain the true state of your feelings. You return, after an absence of one year, and tell me that you still love my daughter. She, during your absence, has only spoken of the moment when you should return to her. I ask you, Jacob, in mercy, bring me back my child!"

"Mr. Ashby, if it was simply because she is a captive, I should put forth every effort to rescue her. But she is, before heaven, my own, and I will not cease my efforts until Grace Ashby is happy with her father. But you are mistaken with regard to whom you are indebted for your rescue. It is to this gentleman, my captain, and to the *Silver Bugle*!"

"Who is the *Silver Bugle*?" asked Hill, as he sprung to his feet.

"The Bugle is not here!" answered Lindell. "But the one to whom you are *all* most indebted is here, and it would be well to give him some thanks."

"Where is he?" asked Hill.

"There." Lindell pointed to the form of a man, who was seated apart from the eager listeners, and who sat with his head bowed upon his hands, silently contemplating the scene around him.

Hill seized a torch and approached the person indicated. He raised his head, and, with an impatient gesture, said:

"You owe me no thanks. Don't annoy me with words."

Hill gazed upon him in silence for a moment, and then asked:

"Have I not heard your voice before?"

"Likely."

"Where?"

"How should I know?"

"Well, this much I do know. You saved me from a blow to-night, which must have proven fatal, and you are, from this

time, my friend. But that I have met you before I feel satisfied. Will you explain to me two things which are unaccountable?"

"Go on."

"How is it that you came in time to-night to rescue us?"

"The *Bugle* called me out."

"There is another mystery—that bugle. Will you explain?"

"Yes, so far. I know its sound means danger. It echoed through the valley where I reside before light yesterday. Stout hearts assembled at its call, and we were informed that this settlement was about to be attacked. I started—arrived—did what I could—want no thanks, and as few words as possible."

"Will you give us any information about the bugle?" asked Hill.

"To what end?"

"Simply interest. It is the first time that sound has been heard in these quarters, and I confess it is somewhat strange."

The stranger raised his eyes, and for the first time his face was clearly visible. He was a man of strange and marked appearance. A face that could not fail to interest, while it would awe into silence any but the most determined. His eyes were deeply set, and of the darkest blue. The lashes were very long, and the brows dark and heavy. The hair, which was long, was worn behind the ears, and curled in natural ringlets, now much tangled, and bearing no evidence of care. His form was not powerful, but there was something noble in its carriage. His face was without beard, although a heavy mustache adorned the lip. But the most singular feature was the eyes. Their glance was strange, startling.

And such a glance he turned upon Hill, when questioned with regard to the "*Silver Bugle*," that even the hunchback started, and a tremor shook his frame. At length he said:

"Captain, your look does not frighten, but it puzzles me. No, 'puzzles me' is not the proper term. It recalls ten thousand remembrances which I fain would banish."

"Don't call me captain."

"What then?"

"Why, simply, Howard Warren, or, if you like it better you may call me the 'Ranger of the Minnesota.'"

"What! And are you that strange man?"

The ranger, as he had styled himself, gave an impatient gesture, and again bent his head upon his hand, in silence.

"Mr. Hill," said Ashby, "don't ask any further questions. You see it distresses him."

The ranger sprang to his feet, and gazing with peculiar earnestness into the face of Hill, he asked:

"Have *you* not suffered deeply?"

"God only knows how much!"

"*Hope! hope!* old man," the ranger exclaimed, in tones which for the first time betrayed any emotion.

"Hope! for what should *I* hope?"

"That—that your—your time for revenge has arrived!"

It had now become daylight, and preparations were being made for a further defense of the block-house in case it should again be attacked. It was resolved that the pursuit of the Indians should commence at once; but, as many of the wounded must be left behind, as well as the aged and the women and children, it was deemed prudent to leave a strong garrison in the fort. The men who were to form this garrison were to dispose of the dead as best they could.

Harry Ashby, who had been absent for an hour or more, now appeared and exclaimed:

"Minnie is safe. She is crossing the field, in company with one of the most beautiful creatures I ever saw. She is dressed in the costume of an Indian maiden, but is fair as the brightest lily which blooms upon the banks of St. Croix."

Several of the party sprung to the entrance and gazed forth. At a little distance from the block-house, Minneapolis was seen leading forward, or rather urging onward, the fair young creature spoken of by Harry Ashby. The task, however, was a difficult one, as the maiden appeared very timid, and several times turned to depart, but was detained by the kind words of Minnie. Hill now made his appearance, and as he saw the approaching maidens, he cried:

"By heavens, she has a *silver bugle* hanging by her side!"

Hill, either in the special interest he felt in the bugle, or

overcome by curiosity, forgot his usual caution, and dashed toward the maidens. The fairy stranger paused but an instant, and then with a cry of fear, bounded from the spot, and disappeared in the adjoining wood. Hill returned to the fort, exclaiming as he did so:

"Ever thus!—shamed—feared by all!"

Howard Warren, or the ranger, came forth, and gazed earnestly after the retreating form of the fair maiden. He drew a heavy sigh, and for a moment walked rapidly back and forth, as if in great agitation. Then, turning to those standing around him, he exclaimed:

"Come, it is time for action. Every moment is precious. Lieutenant Linch, you will take one hundred men and follow the river down upon the western bank. If you fail to overtake the foe, await me at the Mississippi. Harry Ashby, had you not better remain here and command the fort?"

"My father can do that, sir. He is not too badly hurt to give directions, and I must follow the savages, until I find and rescue my poor lost sister."

"Be that my task, sir," answered the ranger. "If, as I gleaned from your conversation, she has fallen into the hands of that villain Archer, it is I who can best accomplish her rescue. He is as wily as he is wicked, and the greatest caution will be necessary. I know his haunts. He will not follow the river, but take to the mountains. If you wish to go, Mr. Ashby, you had better join the Lieutenant. I will rejoin you in a few days, and bring your sister, or at least such information as will enable us to recover her by combined action."

"You are right," replied Harry. "I will go with Mr. Linch."

"And with whom shall I go?" asked Minnie, as she approached Harry, and placed her hand upon his arm, while she gazed earnestly into his eyes.

"Will you not remain with our friends here, Minnie?" asked Harry, in a gentle voice.

"Oh, no! not Harry—and here, when you are gone!" And Minnie hid her face in the manly bosom of one in whose love her very soul seemed centered.

"But there may be danger, Minnie!"

"Then I *must* go!"

"It shall be as you wish, Minnie."

"And you, Mr. Hill, may accompany me," said the ranger.

The arrangements were soon complete. An affectionate farewell was spoken by the friends—a God bless you—and the parties set forth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RENEGADE'S PRIZE.

It was during the most violent part of the thunder-storm of the night of the attack, that a man, powerful in form and repulsive in features, as seen by the brilliant glare of the lightning, guided his canoe along the river, keeping close to the shore upon which stood the block-house. He was evidently experienced in the handling of his little craft, as his advance was very rapid, although contending against the stream. At length he struck into a small creek which emptied into the St. Croix. It was a secure harbor, entirely concealed by the thick, overhanging boughs, and totally dark, except as illuminated by the lightning's flash. The stranger spring from his canoe, as one familiar with the place, and drawing it some distance from the water, he concealed it beneath the heavy growth of swamp willows. Then approaching the river's bank he seated himself, and gazed down the stream. At length he exclaimed:

"Ah! they are coming, and by the Great Spirit I swear, that this very night my purpose shall be accomplished, or I will leave my lifeless body there! I have worked two years for her—yes, her *home* is now ready, and the despised, rejected, humbled squire will make his own terms; and with *her*, *not* with her haughty father. No; *him* I will spurn, or kill!"

The speaker started to his feet.

"Curses! There is that sound again. I do not know its meaning, but I fancy it bodes me no good. Whenever I have work on hand, that sound breaks upon my ear, and I

find my victims prepared to receive me. And sometimes I am failed!"

"What is the matter with you, Archer?"

The person addressed as Archer simply turned, and believing by whom he was addressed, replied:

"Comanche, did you hear that sound?"

Now we are sorry to dispel the poetic charm which centers around the first-travel. That is, the picture drawn by romancers, of noble forms arrayed in picturesque warrior costumes, and of that noble nature which scorns treachery, and whose code of honor is of the highest standard. This may, in many instances, be true. And any Indian bearing a name so high-sounding, and so historical as that of Comanche, might be painted as a hero warrior, even though an enemy. But the writer of this tale once met this Comanche face to face, in a bloody fray, and many who fought upon the border of Minnesota will at once recognize the picture.

Comanche was (if we can guess the age of an Indian) about thirty years old. He was almost a giant in size. His head was immensely large, his cheek-bones very prominent, upon which was almost always to be seen a quantity of red paint, which gave the appearance of having been placed there about in the same manner as a dirty school-boy would slap a quantity of mud between the stones of the play-house. His little sweat-bath had balls, for the purpose of rendering the head more secure by his rude masonry. His shoulders were very broad, and his arms very long. Indeed, so long that once they were put out he made the remark that they would not be worth carrying to see them drop off. His face was hideous. His dress was of the roughest style, and modern in character. He carried a long rifle, while in a belt which girded his waist was concealed a large knife. He spoke perfect English, which was to be accounted for in the fact that he had passed much of his life upon the Mississippi, and mingled freely with the whites, to whom he was known as "Gopher." They who met him supposed that, in the usual manner of the whites, they held the Indians in a low estimation, the terror of the whole country, and that he was to an immoderate degree.

Comanche was not chief of his tribe, but in high estimation

by the whole nation, and among the "braves," was looked upon with that respect which is inspired in the Indian heart by daring deeds. None contented with him for the laurels he wore. To the question of Archer the Indian replied:

"I heard a sound familiar to me. And I have often tried to catch the devil who sends forth those notes of warning, but I have failed. I am resolved upon one thing: after this night's job is over I shall next turn my attention to this sound."

Archer gazed upon the Indian for a moment and then replied:

"You had better give all your thoughts to the work before us. My opinion is, that we shall have all we can well contend with."

"Have you made observations sufficient to warrant the advance?"

"I will *lead* you. They are strong, and our fight must be a desperate one. But we both have our own purposes to gratify. You wish to secure the squaw Minicapolis, while my very soul is bent upon that beautiful girl, Grace Ashby. She spurned me two years ago. But she was then only fourteen, and I did not mind that so much; but her father struck me, and called me a ruffian; and, by the eternal, I will now have my revenge! For two years I have plotted for that which must be accomplished to-night."

"Lead on then," said Conanchet, with a peculiar smile.

The Indian darted through the thicket until he reached the edge of the open field, and then halted for a moment. A large party of savages already had reached the spot, and were lying prostrate upon the ground. Directions were given in an undertone by Conanchet to several who appeared to be acting as leaders, and then Archer and himself made the circuit of the field, keeping within the edge of the wood, and finally reached the river above the fort. Archer, without a word, walked directly into the water, and lying flat upon his back, commenced floating down the stream. He was followed by Conanchet.

It was not long before they reached the black-house. Without the slightest sound they approached close to the side of the building. There they listened, and could distinctly hear

the conversation which occurred between the parties in the fort. It was not long before other savages followed their leaders, and a sufficient number reached the fort unperceived, to determine Comanche to begin the attack. The canoes were yet to be seen upon the river in large numbers, and, as the attention of the garrison was drawn entirely to these, it was thought that if by any stratagem, those within could be induced to open the doors, they could be overcome without much trouble. Acting upon this resolve, Archer crept close to the outer door, and commenced the series of howlings and shrieks already described. But in this, as the reader is already aware, he utterly failed.

The attack was now ordered. The savages reaching the shore, sprung from their canoes, and rushed forward to the assistance of those already engaged. But being repulsed at every point, they resolved to fire the fort. It was during the explosion, and the consequent confusion, that Archer determined upon a bold movement. He saw that the fort was supplied with water from a deep ditch connecting with the river, and, with what he had every reason to believe, was the lower room. To this point he at once turned his attention. He found that if he would make his entrance beneath the surface of the water, it might easily be accomplished, provided he met with no resistance within. This he did not anticipate, as the attention of the garrison was occupied with those without.

Quietly he crept through the ditch. Reaching the interior, he paused for a moment, and listened. He heard a confusion of sounds, low whisperings, and expressions of fear, but, in the deep darkness, he could not distinguish the object of his search. Even his own entrance had been undetected. Bending down to the earth, he changed his voice to the most humble tones and called:

"O-mee! O-mee!"

"What means thy name?" answered a voice, soft and low.

Archer crept in the direction of the sound. He again paused, and the answer came close by his side. Now was the time. Prompt action was necessary. He could scarcely restrain from a yell of delight, for the object of his

ventures was now within his grasp. He reached forth his hands and seized his supposed victim, but a series of shrieks convinced him that he had mistaken the person.

"What is the matter?" asked a voice, which Archer at once recognized to be that of Grace Ashby.

He instantly hurled aside the person he held, and, seizing Miss Ashby, he sprung into the water. In an instant he dragged her through into the river. She could not give any alarm, as she was nearly strangled with the water, and rendered almost unconscious with fright.

As soon as the villain had reached the river, he struck down the current, and in a few moments came to the place where he had concealed his canoe. He gazed behind him, and was satisfied that his savage friends had been again fooled, but he knew they would not be likely to give up the siege, and that those within the fort could not pursue him, even if it should be discovered that Grace had been carried away. But that warning bugle-blast was now becoming more distinct, approaching momentarily nearer: it foreboded danger to him.

Dragging the canoe from its concealment, he sprung into it with the helpless maiden, and darted forward until he had reached the middle of the stream. He then floated with the current, and for many miles did not even utter a word.

At length the gray of morning began to be visible over the rugged hills which flanked the eastern sky, and Archer, nearing the shore, moored his little boat in a secure retreat. Taking Grace in his arms, he sprung upon the shore. He bore her but a short distance, when he entered a small unimproved hut, and placing her upon the floor, seated himself but a short distance from his victim, and gazed long, and with a triumphant smile, upon her. Miss Ashby was the first to speak.

"Why have you taken me from my friends?" she asked, as she shuddered beneath his gaze.

"Because I love you!" came the mocking response.

"It seems to me a singular manner of exhibiting your affection for me!"

"Say rather a lack of love on your part for your husband, thus to question his actions!"

"What do you mean by husband?"

"That if I am not already your husband, I soon shall be, and it will be your duty to love me."

"That I can never do!"

"Oh! yes you will, when you find how kind I will be to you."

"If you wish to be kind to me, return me to my father, and he will forgive you for this act of violence. Oh! it will break his old heart when he is compelled to believe that his child is forever lost to him!"

"Miss Grace Ashby, do you know me?" asked Archer.

"Yes, you are Philip Duval!"

"I was ~~once~~ Philip Duval. I was once happy. But your father scorned me simply because I loved you. Ah! spurned, and scorned me. Do you hear? My hopes were centered in you. Your love was more to me than all else in the world. The treatment I there received from your father, drove me mad, and I swore the most terrible oath that I would be revenged on him, and that I would possess you. I have kept that oath. You are now in my power and your father is a prisoner with the Indians. I have prepared for our journey. Under the floor of this room are provisions. We shall make occasional halts on our way, and at each place I have made preparations the same as here. When we reach our destination, you will marry, instead of the once honest Duval, the man now known as Jim Archer, the renegade. Our marriage will take place in the Indian style."

While Archer was giving utterance to these words, Grace sat in worded silence. When the allusion to her father having been made a prisoner escaped the speaker's lips, she sprang to her feet, and something like a flash of indignation lit up her eyes. But when Archer referred to the marriage according to Indian rites, an expression of defiance rested upon her countenance, which caused even the renegade to start in wonder.

"Duval, or Archer, as you call yourself," cried Grace Ashby, "return to me. Two years since you asked my hand in marriage. I was little better than a child then, but I loved, and ever will possess all the noble qualities of head and heart to which you were a stranger, was the object of that love."

"Yes, Jacob Lindell was the stripling's name. I remember him well!" added Archer, bitterly.

"Don't take that name upon your foul lips. It is true I *do* love Jacob Lindell, and I love to hear his name, but not spoken by such as you. You tell me my father is a prisoner. I do not believe you. Do you wish to triumph farther? You shall. Two years ago my father consented that this very day, if our loves did not change, Jacob should become my husband. Had it not been for this unfortunate trouble, our dwelling, now in ashes, would to-day have been a scene of gayety, and the happiest among the happy would have been my beloved and his bride. You have brought this upon me!"

"I have—and what is more, you never will be the bride of Lindell."

"Who will prevent me?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Are your prospects very fair now?"

"Yes. Separation under such circumstances will only render our reunion more happy."

"You will never be reunited, unless it be in the next world, for I have already sent *your* lover there!"

"Oh! heavens!" Grace sunk upon the floor, and for a short time gave vent to sobs. At last she raised her head and asked:

"Have you murdered him?"

"I have *killed* him!"

"When?"

"Four days ago!"

"Archer," cried Grace, springing to her feet, "you are a liar, as well as a villain. A messenger came to my father last evening, direct from Mr. Lindell, and he was alive the day before. He is, ere this, on *your* track, and, just as sure as you live, you will be overtaken and punished as you deserve. And until then—there—there—*Justice*—*Patience*!" shrieked Grace, as she sprung to the door, and ran out upon the river.

Archer sprang to the door, but in an instant returned. With an exclamation of anger he seized Grace. In a moment he had closely bandaged her eyes, and ~~so~~ ^{so} that she was completely that all was darkness, while any attempt to utter a sound was vain. She heard a strange sound—the clatter

of bows—and then felt herself falling. However, she alighted upon some soft substance, without sustaining any injury. In an instant she was grasped, and borne along what to her appeared an immense distance. She felt the atmosphere growing denser and damper, and finally heard the dropping of water. She was soon placed upon a rock and Archer whispered in her ear:

"You think to foil me! But my triumph is the more complete. I will tell you one thing. Your lover is now within the sound of your voice, and yet you can not utter one word. He will soon leave this spot, and thus I will now and always triumph."

CHAPTER V.

THE FOREST STRUGGLE.

THE parties, after making the proper arrangements, set off at once in pursuit of the retreating Indians and of the captive maiden. Lieutenant Lindell, with about one hundred determined men, commenced the descent of the river. Their advance was very rapid. Among the most eager and tireless was the commander, Lindell. The men were divided in equal squads, about fifty of whom took the west bank of the river under their lieutenant, while the balance of the party, who had chosen Harry Ashby as their temporary commander, kept the east bank. In company with this party was Minneapolis, who was ever in the advance, darting from point to point, without appearing to exhibit the least fatigue. At times she was so far in the advance, that considerable solicitude was felt for her safety; but then she would come bounding back, and for some time continue by her lover's side.

Minnie had been absent nearly an hour, when a shriek was heard at some distance up the mountain side, and immediately after the report of a rifle rung through the trees. Harry Ashby sprang forward, and was rapidly followed by the remainder of the party. His fears, however, were quickly allayed, as he saw Minnie come bounding toward them, but

she was considerably agitated. As soon as possible, she explained, that, concealed in some large rocks which overhung the valley through which she was passing, she had seen a large number of Indians, evidently awaiting their approach. A powerful savage sprung into the path with the evident design of seizing her, but with her ever-ready revolver, she had sent a bullet with an aim so true, that the savage had fallen to the earth with a yell, but, as she was retreating, she had distinctly seen him crawling for the rocks above. Her cries were made for the purpose of hurrying forward assistance. From the description given of the savage, Ashby had no doubt that it was the notorious Conanchet. He had seen that person on several occasions. On one of these he had visited the house of old Mr. Ashby, and had tried to prevail upon him to part with Minneapolis, and he well remembered the fierce frown, and the bitter ejaculation to which he gave vent when Minnie herself positively refused to leave her friends. They had long expected some act of violence from him, and more especially as it was known that the renegade, Archer, had connected himself to his band. Both had a personal animosity to gratify and an especial end to gain, in the securing of Minneapolis and Grace Ashby. It was a fortunate occurrence for the party that the girl had discovered the Indians, else they might have been fired upon from ambush, and, as the Indian seldom misses his mark, it is possible not one would have been spared to tell the fatal tale. This, of course, would depend upon the numbers concealed; but it was thought they must nearly equal the whites, and if the savages should deliver one effective fire, it would be an easy matter for them to rush forward with the knife and dispatch the others. Therefore great caution was required.

The advance was made as quickly as possible near to the rocks, each man being careful to keep beyond range of the rifle, or to keep themselves covered with the trees. Scouts were sent out on all sides of the ledge for the purpose of discovering some point by which an attack could be made, but the position above appeared almost impregnable. Not a savagery was to be seen, neither was there the slightest sign of human habitation. But this was well understood by the Indian warriors, and no one ventured an advance.

At length one of the men, who had been upon a reconnaissance to the upper side of the ledge, returned to the main party. He evidently had some information, judging from the pleased expression of his face. He said:

"Cap'n Ashby, I've jist hit on a plan as I reckons will stir up them tarnel copper-colored scoundrels."

"Well, Mr. Dawson, what is your plan?" asked Ashby.

"Wal, its a kinder cute one for me, I reckon, 'specially as I'm reckoned not to be any too cute any way."

"Well, give us the details."

"Wal, I'll jist propel. Cast yer peepers up to the top of that are hill. Do ye see that scraggy oak?"

"Yes, it stands close to the upper edge of the ledge, I should judge."

"You judge jist right. Wal, now I tell ye what my straterry is. Jist take a good look at that are oak, and you'll see that it leans a little bit down the hill, and that, if it fell at all, it would be mighty apt to tumble rite over them rocks. Now the reds can't get any chance to pepper me while I'm cuttin', and if about a dozen of you will go up there with me, and if any of the reds mount the rock that protects me while I'm working, you'll jist pick 'em off, I'll take an ax and soon bring down that oak, and I reckon when it falls, them are long scraggy limbs will punch into the holes in the rock, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if the reds get tickled terribly!"

A burst of laughter followed this singular proposition, but as it appeared feasible, it was arranged that some dozen of the best marksmen should accompany Dawson to the top of the hill, and act as his guard until he had accomplished his work.

It was not long before the ringing of the ax was heard. There was evident commotion among the rocks, those concealed there comprehending the state of affairs. Several times the Indians attempted to mount the wall which stood between them and the chopper, but the sharp fire of his guard drove them instantly back. Besides, this movement on their part exposed them to the fire of those below the rocks.

Jist as the immense oak began to settle and crackle, a number of the frightened savages leaped from their hiding-places to the more exposed positions lower down the ledge, in front of the rock of the falling tree. They were quickly brought

low by the true aim of the unerring hunters' rifles. Others sprang over the upper wall, and dashed with all their frantic fury upon Dawson and his guard, but instantly met a similar fate.

Down—down—crashing, tearing, came the mighty oak. The crash echoed far and wide through the forest, and was succeeded by the most horrible yells of agony, while many a frantic savage leaped far into the gulf below, and was dashed to pieces.

"Now is the time. Upon them, boys—charge!" cried Ashby, and he sprang forward.

Tearing up the mountain's rocky steep went the brave band. Yet their advance was hotly contested. Many of the savages were uninjured, and these sprang forward with their rifles. Still the hunters pressed on, although a number of them fell to rise no more. The upper ledge was reached and mounted, Ashby leading the advance. They were met with a deadly discharge from the rifles of their foes, and Harry Ashby fell back, bleeding and almost senseless. In an instant Minnie was by his side. She bent over him, tore open his vest, and there she beheld the crimson—that blood in which flowed her very life. She started wildly, and a half-choked exclamation of terror escaped her; then, trembling in very agony of soul, she fell upon his breast.

During the desperate struggle with the Indians, a voice was heard within their retreat, loud and commanding, urging forward his fellows to the most desperate resistance, and to revenge the slaughter of their brothers. The voice could be clearly recognized as that of the "brave" Comanche. And when the volley was given which wounded so many of our hunter band, and among them Harry Ashby, the savages sent forth a yell of triumphant defiance which made the forest echo and re-echo with their notes. In a moment it was echoed back by a shout even more terrific, which was again answered, and again and again returned and re-answered.

"By thunder," cried Dawson, "here comes a tangle lot of reds! Quick; load and stand ready!"

Ashby opened his eyes, and, gazing upon Dawson, asked:

"How large a force are approaching?"

"By the jumping jingo, cap'n, there's a tarnel sight of 'em. I should think a clean hundred." —

"How many men have we left who are in a condition to fight?"

"Not more than thirty."

"Then quick. Start for the river. Spring in and swim across. Our friends can not be far from us on the other side."

"And leave you here, cap'n?"

"Yes—quick—yes," replied Ashby, impatiently.

"No, I'll be hanged if I do! What, leave you here in the hands of them are varminths? You don't know Bill Dawson, if ye think he's such a coward as to run without striking one blow in defence of his cap'n, even if the odds was ten times as great."

"Then, as your captain, I command you to. You are second in command. While I live I will be obeyed. There—there—good friend, go! I shall die. Don't mind me. Go, I command you, and take Minnie with you."

"Oh no! no! dear, dying Harry; do not force your Minnie from your side at such a moment! Oh, God! it would kill me! Dear Harry, I can not survive you one short hour. Let me remain and die with you!" And the poor maiden sobbed and clung to her wounded lover, as if her soul must be torn from her body when she was compelled to part with him.

"Minnie, my own darling Minnie, it would give me the greatest joy—ay, almost take away the agony of death, if I could pass away gazing upon you. That is, if I could be assured of your safety. But Comanchet is there. I saw him, and, if I should die here, knowing that you would fall in his power, it would render my death-agonies doubly severe. Minnie, my own darling angel, go, and when you have rejoined our friends, you can return and rescue me if I am still alive, and if I am dead you can avenge me. Minnie, go, go!"

"I will, I will! Harry, you called me an angel, and like an angel I shall hover near you, and when you are no longer here, I shall join you there!"

"Quick! quick!" cried Ashby. "They are upon us!"

Minnie's lips pressed her lover but an instant in her arms,

and then darted from his side. The balance of the party rushed down the hill toward the river. They were not an instant too soon to escape the murderous fire which was poured upon them by the approaching party. Our friends dashed into the river, and all being expert swimmers, soon were upon the opposite shore.

The pursuit was not followed up by the savages, from the fact that some eight or ten of the wounded hunters had necessarily been left behind, and to these they first turned their attention.

The fragment of the retreating party, after reaching the west bank of the St. Croix, gave the signals which had been agreed upon by each company when they separated, taking the opposite banks of the river. This signal was the firing of six shots in rapid succession. Traces were found where the party of Lindell evidently had passed along, and for an hour the journey was continued. The signal was frequently given, and at length it was answered.

When Dawson and his men, now only twenty-six in number, met those of Lieutenant Lindell, and gave, in his rough way, an account of their fight, there was scarcely a man who did not exhibit upon his face the most determined resolution. Lindell observed this, and, clenching his sword, he said:

"I need not ask *who* will return with me to that spot, for I see every man is ready."

"Yes—yes!" echoed the band.

"How many do you think the Indians number, Dawson?" asked Lindell.

"Well, I should think something over a hundred, including the dead and wounded ones."

"And we are seventy-seven. It is enough. But say a moment. I heard the shriek of a female in this direction, but I cannot find her since, and I must endeavor to ascertain from whence it proceeded."

"Look out it ain't another party of reds trying to draw us into a trap."

"Where is the maiden Minneapolis?" asked Lindell.

"Well, now, I'll be darned! When Captain Ashley was here, he said to me that I should go and take the girl

with me. I saw her as we came down the hill, but I don't remember seeing her since that time. If she's been drowned in the river, I'll blow my brains out for my stupidity."

"Minnie may have become separated from you, and the voice I have just heard may possibly be her own. Let us search."

The party now struck into the wood, and soon arrived at the small hut which had been occupied by Archer and his victim, Grace. Anxiously they searched, and loudly they called upon the name of Minneapolis; but there was no response. It was finally decided that the supposed female voice was only an imaginary one, and the company at once set out on their return to the recent bloody scene of strife.

In something over an hour they reached the river opposite the point where the fray had taken place. There was but one way in which to cross the stream, and that was by fording the greatest portion of the distance, and swimming the swift channel. With the usual precaution of the frontier warrior, it was decided to send some half-dozen in advance, in order to ascertain what the reception would be upon reaching the opposite shore.

The party reached the opposite bank without any opposition, and penetrated a short distance into the forest. Soon one of them reappeared, and, dashing into the river, struck out rapidly for the west shore, where the company were awaiting the report of their scouts.

"Quick!—for God's sake, quick! *They are burning our wounded companions at the stake!*"

These words were answered by shouts fierce and wild, and our hunters spring into the river. As they approached the shore a large number of Indians made their appearance, and fired upon the advancing party. But they paused not, but, like men determined to avenge and conquer, they leaped upon the bank. They had held their rifles high above their heads, and were thus prepared for the deadly conflict. They met the savages with a volley so deadly that they recoiled, and before they could rally the hunters sprung upon them with the knife and the clubbed rifle. It was but the work of a few moments to lay low the better half of the force, although the ground upon the river was strewn with our hunter's dead.

They rushed forward, driving those of the savages who still survived in terror before them. They soon reached the summit of the hill, where the most dreadful sight met their view. Lashed to the surrounding trees were the forms of some dozen of our wounded, while around them were blazing the dry fagots which had been gathered together and fired by the brutal foe. Some were writhing and shrieking in their agony, as the flames darted up high around them, while at other points the blaze had only just communicated with the fuel, and the victim was yet unscorched. The savages had danced and yelled in brutal glee around the sufferers, but as the first report of the rifles was heard, they ceased their revels, and turned their attention to their own defence. They saw the fate of their warriors and the panic which ensued, and they at once took to flight. Lieutenant Linell observed this, and at once gave the order for the majority of his hunters to start in pursuit of the flying Indians, an order most promptly obeyed.

It was but the work of an instant to throw aside the burning brands and fagots which surrounded each victim, and to cut the green thongs with which they were bound. Two of the poor creatures were horribly charred, and in a few moments death put an end to their sufferings, while the others were more or less injured, but their cases were not deemed hopeless.

The dead were buried, and a guard detailed to return with the wounded to the block-house. But no one could give any information with regard to Harry Ashby. He had been left behind badly wounded, but his body was neither among the dead nor the wounded.

CHAPTER VI.

NEAMATA.

HOWARD WARREN, in company with Hill, left the block house, and started in the direction taken by the strange maiden, whom the latter had recognized as the "Silver Bagle," from the fact that such an instrument was slung across her shoulders. For miles they continued on their journey without the slightest interruption. At length Warren stopped suddenly, and bent his ear to the ground. Hill was no less apt in the discovery that some one was approaching. But it was soon ascertained that the sound was only the forerunner of one person, and our friends stepped forward to meet him.

"Well, stranger," said Hill, "what news may you bring?"

"Bad enough," was the reply. "The reds are raising the devil over the Mississippi, and, in fact, all along the border. I heard that they intended hot work in these quarters, and so I just started to put the folks on their guard."

"Has there been any acts of open violence in Minnesota?" asked Warren.

"I should think so. More than forty families have been murdered, and lots of 'em that once lived peaceful on the river are now in St. Paul's, where they had to run for safety."

"Have the people of the border taken no action in the matter?"

"Oh, yes. The boys of St. Paul, God bless 'em, have turned out nobly, and are after the red devils with a sheep stick. I hear, too, that Uncle Sam is going to send us help, and I hope he'll do so mighty quick. A company did come up from Fort Dodge; but, Lord, what's a company against so many reds?"

"Where are the forces of the Indians concentrated?"

"Well, they're considerably scattered. Some on 'em are up here, and some more are along the Mississippi and the Minnesota rivers, and I tell you these squaws keep things

moving. But the place where they are the strongest is on the Mirror."

"Where is that?"

"Why, stranger, I thought everybody had heard of that lake!"

"I never heard of it," answered Hill.

"I know the place well," replied Warren. "And have the Indians quartered upon that lake?"

"Lord, yes; I should think so. There's about fifteen hundred on 'em, and they've got a regular fort built of logs running all around the lake, and their huts on the inside. It'll take a power of the boys to drive 'em out."

"Were you sent up the St. Croix to warn the settlers of approaching danger?" asked Warren.

"Well, now, stranger, that's a delicate question, and involves a confession on my part. But you must first promise you won't laugh at me."

"Go on," said Warren.

"First answer me one question. Have you seen about these parts one of the darndest sweetest little creatures that ever did live?"

"Oh, I see," said Warren, with a smile; "you are in love, and came to these parts because you supposed your lady-love in danger. Well, I applaud your devotion."

"Well, you're a little out there. It is true I'm in love, but the cuss of it is, she don't love me a dang-dit. She's always talking about some captain, and, by thunder, if the captain is a good fellow she shall have him, and I just come along to keep the reds off till she could get to him."

"What is the name of this lady?" asked Warren.

"Well, she's called Neameta; but she is usually known as the Mountain Echo. She got this name because she roars everywhere, and when danger is about to come upon the white folks, she let's them know something's up, so that they can be on their guard."

"In what manner does she warn them?" asked Warren.

"Why, with a silver bugle, which—why, what's the matter with ye, strangers? You stare like me!"

"Is she—"

"Mr. Hill," said Warren, interrupting him, "let me question

Here. Sir," continued Warren, speaking to the stranger, "we have had a terrible fight here, or near this place. We were the better prepared to meet it on account of the warning given by a bugle-blast. It was an unusual sound to those who resided in this vicinity, and it placed them upon their guard. To me the sound was not so strange, but I knew it meant danger to some one, and collecting all my men, I followed the sound, and arrived only in time to prevent a fearful slaughter. Therefore you will not think strange that I should feel an especial interest in this bugle, or this fair Indian, and I beg you will tell me all you know of her."

"Oh, I'll just do that with pleasure. I like to talk about the gal. In the first place, I'll tell ye who *I* be. I ain't much account, but my name is Joe Schryer. I live on the Minnesota, about six miles from Mirror lake. The Sioux reds used to come up to the lake on their hunting and fishing excursions, and most always brought the gal with them. But I reckon you're in the fault about her being an Indian gal. She's a white, or I hope never to see my own color again. Well, I'd seen the gal considerable often, and somehow, every time I looked into her clear blue eyes, I felt myself perfectly condescended. I kinder thought I was sick, and concluded my illness was an affection of the heart, cos I never could look on that gal but my heart began to jump; and, what was still more strange, whenever I tried to speak I couldn't get my mouth off at all. At length I met her alone one day. I asked her to sit down beside me, and she did so. I asked her who her father and mother was. She didn't know. I told her I believed she was white, and that her parents would die of grief if she could not be found. She burst into tears, and exclaimed, 'that's just what *Howard* said.' Then I told her I loved her, and asked her if she could love me, and she answered, while she wept, 'I love *Howard*, but he never told me that he loved me.' And so you see, strangers, I found out that the gal already loved a man named *Howard*. It didn't make me jealous a bit, for, said I, 'I ain't good enough for that ore gal any way.'

"Well, I found out one day, while the reds were ferrying the lake, that the gal was going to leave the tribe, and that the principal reason was, her lover had gone to the St. Cloud

country, and she determined to follow him. And so says I, 'Joe, you just follow on and keep the gal out of danger, and see who her lover is; and, if he don't treat her like a white Christian lady, then, Joe Schryer you know just what you have got to do.'"

"You are a noble fellow, Mr. Joe, and you need not be alarmed with regard to the honor of Howard Warren."

"You know him, then?"

"I am Howard Warren, and I know Neamata loves me. I have endeavored to change the course of her thoughts, but have not succeeded. Still, you may be satisfied that in me she has a true friend."

"I'd lash snakes out of any one who said different. What, you Howard? Well, let me tell you one thing: you've got the love of an angel, and I hope you'll be just as happy with that ere gal as poor Joe would have been if he hadn't been such a rough one, and the fairy could have loved him." And Joe brushed a big tear from his eye, as he grasped the hand of Warren.

"Tell me one thing more," said Warren. "Where did you last see the Bugle?"

"That's my fault. I followed the gal until last night, and then I lost track of her. And what troubles her most is, that I saw one of the Sioux braves, the terrible Conanchet, near this place."

"You saw Conanchet?" cried Hill. "Where?"

"Not two miles from here."

"Was he alone?"

"Yes, entirely alone."

"Which way was he proceeding?"

"Toward the river."

"I shall follow him," cried Hill, in tones of bitterness.

"Have a care, Hill," said Warren. "You think too much of revenge. You suppose you have nothing to live for, but you are mistaken. Don't rashly peril your life. Conanchet is a man of giant proportions, and among the chiefs of his tribe he stands foremost. My advice to you is to beware of Conanchet."

"Do you think I lack courage to meet that man?" asked Hill, while a smile of bitterness gathered upon his brow.

"Look at my form! See what a monster I am, and then understand me. Ah, I see by your smile you do. Let those fear to die who have something to live for."

"Mr. Hill," replied Warren, in a tone of sadness, "do as you think best. Go, follow Conanchet, but promise me one thing."

"Well."

"That you will not jeopardize your life, and that you will join us, or come to Mirror lake within ten days."

"I will."

"Then go, Mr. Hill, but remember I shall expect you at the lake."

Hill, without another word, started in the direction which Joe had indicated as having been taken by the Sioux brave.

"Now, Mr. Schryer—"

"Call me Joe—nothing but Joe, if it's all the same to you, Mr. Howard."

"Well, then, my friend, Joe, for so I feel I must call you, you say that you followed Neamata simply to protect her?"

"That's just what I did, and I'd follow her to the end of the world, even if I'd had to walk over live coals half the way. Why, Lord bless you, sir, if any harm should happen to her, I should feel almost as guilty as a murderer."

"And have you no hope that she will eventually love you?"

"No, sir. I don't want her to love me only as a brother, ~~cause~~ she'll be a darn site happier with you."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I'm such a rough one, and no match for her. Now, you're a gentleman, and, although she's been brought up among the Indians, she's a real lady, and I shouldn't wonder a bit if she was the daughter of some great man."

"And what do you intend doing, friend Joe?"

"Well, I think I shall go up to the Ashby settlement."

"Do so, and tell Mr. Ashby to come at once, and bring his family to the lake."

"Just so," and Joe, without further words, started off.

Howard Warren gazed after the retreating form of Joe for some time; then, seating himself upon the ground, he bent his head upon his hands, and for many minutes remained

silent and motionless. He was at length aroused from his reverie by the maiden Neamata, who, suddenly appearing beside him, knelt upon the grass, and, gazing eagerly into his eyes, exclaimed:

"Oh, Howard, I see you once more and I am happy!"

Neamata, or the "Silver Bugle," as she was termed by the inhabitants of the Ashby settlement, was, if one could paint an angel, the most thorough embodiment of that celestial being that man ever met upon this sphere, since the days when seraphs and mortals communed in common.

In stature she was sylph-like. The eyes so clear and heavenly that you could almost fancy the soul was shining through them, and in that true soul's depths the white-robed angels might have found a home, so pure was it in thought and act. And mortal, gazing into those fall orbs, could look no farther for those roses, which blossom in the sunbeams. Although the brow was fair, the complexion of the lily's hue, the hair of golden brightness, yet the embodiment of all the qualities of beauty, truth and love was embraced in that one glance which she gave Warren. She was a child of Nature, just as the Creator molded her.

Warren started as he heard her voice, and for some time did not speak. At length, as if uttering his sentiments unconsciously, he said:

"Oh, how beautiful you are, Neamata!"

"Then you will love me, won't you, Howard?" said the gentle girl, as she nestled closer to his side.

"Neamata, do you wish to become my wife?" asked Warren.

"Oh no! no! Howard, if you loved me you would not ask this!" And the maiden bowed her head and wept.

"Why do you not wish to become my wife if you love me, Neamata?"

"Oh, Howard, it is because I love you so dearly that I can not be your wife! Do not ask me this! Oh! let me remain with you. I'll follow you through every danger, live always by your side, and be content that I can gaze into your face, watch your smile, which will make my heart beat, watch the soul of my Howard when beaming through his eyes, and, if it speaks of sadness, then poor Neamata will

seek to drive that sadness from his brow, or, if she can not, will share it with him. But do not ask me to become your wife, dear Howard. The one who loves as I love you could not live and be a slave." X X

"A slave, Neamata? Oh, yes, I understand you. You are thinking of the *Indian* wife!"

"Yes, the Indian wife. She who marries but to be beaten, to toil and drudge, to watch the whims of him who does not love, to be the patient, willing thing—worse than his dog—of him she must despise. I wish to remain with you, Howard, because I love you, and because I had hoped you loved me. But, I can not become your wife, unless in refusing to be so you drive me from you in anger. Sooner than *this* should be, I'll be your slave—your wife!"

"Why did you leave your home, Neamata?"

"Because I was no longer happy there. I learned that the pale-faces were in danger all along the frontier, and more especially upon the Minnesota and St. Croix. You are a pale-face, dear Howard, and though the recollection of another home, where father and mother smiled upon me, and where brothers and sisters shared my sport, is so indistinct as to be like a dream almost forgotten, still you have told me that I am no Indian, and to my own ancestors I feel that my services are due. And so, dear Howard, I took my bundle—the one you gave me many years ago—and followed after you. And I have learned the perils of approaching danger; I have found you at last, and I only ask that I may always live near you, but not become your wife."

"Neamata," said Warren, in a tone of voice which betrayed deep feeling, "I do love, deeply, but until I have accomplished certain purposes, you can not become my wife."

"How, shall I remain with you always?"

"Neamata, you have much to learn and much to unlearn. I will be your teacher, for I feel that our destinies are as truly linked together in the future as they have been in the

past. I will be a wife to you, dear Howard."

"Do you mean, Neamata, just what I have said it is to be?—that you will remain with me, and that it is because I love you that I will be as good as a slave? It is true the

Indian wife becomes a slave, and, viewing marriage from *their* stand-point, it is no wonder that you shrink from it. Besides, only the savage custom sanctions the Indian's rites. Simply an agreement is made, the father receives a present, and, without the authority of any higher power, or the instructions of divine inspiration, the wife becomes in reality a slave, to toil, to cultivate the corn-field, to do all the drudgery, while the husband follows the track of the wild deer or buffalo, or the war-path. It is not so where people are enlightened by the teachings of Christianity. This is not the manner in which your father and mother were married."

"Oh, Howard, *do* tell me all. I love to hear you speak, and I love to listen to your tales of other lands and other customs. Tell me what a Christian marriage is."

"The wife is looked upon as a gift from heaven. Parties meet, and feel an attraction for each other. Sometimes an act of mutual kindness inspires mutual love. Well, usually, the acquaintance thus begun ripens into a deeper love, and each feels that the other's presence is necessary to their happiness."

"Oh, Howard, I understand you. So *we* met. *You* told me *how* you had *met* me, and I loved you, dear Howard. I felt that I could not *live* without you. Is that not the manner you have just described to me, that Christians feel?"

"Yes, Neamata, you have understood me correctly."

"And don't *you* feel as if you could not live without me?"

"Neamata, I never shall be happy without you."

"Then I am all your own. I want no greater happiness than to be with you. You have told me of bright palaces, but it would not be bright to me if you were not there. You have told me of heaven, a place where the Great Spirit, whom you call God, and the angels dwell. But I do not wish to go and dwell in those bright palaces or in the heavens you have painted, unless *you* are there, dear Howard, and I can nestle close to your breast, for it is *only* here that I am happy."

"Oh, Neamata, what a bright jewel in the crown of civilization you could become," said Warren, as he bent upon her the most earnest gaze, and listened to her words.

"I do not fully understand you, Howard. But I fear I

have said something wrong, for your brow is sad now, and you smiled upon me a moment since."

"Oh, no; you do not make me sad, but happy," replied Warren.

"I am so glad. But tell me more what it is to be a Christian wife."

"I will, Neamata. When each thus loves the other, it is determined between them that they will unite their future destinies by holy matrimony. On most occasions the father and mother of each are consulted. All fathers and mothers feel that their children owe them sufficient respect and love to consult them upon all occasions which are considered so important. All fathers and mothers love their children, and even though the husband or the wife might not have been of their own selection, still, as it is the child's happiness they seek, and know that only love can make that child happy, they forego any personal preference they might have, and bless the union and their loved ones."

"Oh, happy wife! Howard, how can a wife, so happy, love her husband as he should be loved?"

"Neamata, you have not asked me how it is *after* the marriage has taken place. Do you not fear the wife is made a slave?"

"Oh, no. Those who love thus, or those who marry thus, never could become a slave, one to the other. But tell me of the marriage."

"Well, after the arrangements are made, the friends are invited, and, amid a gay assemblage, who smile their joy, the future husband and the wife appear. The minister, the man who tells us of the Great Spirit and of all his requirements, who is given the power to marry by law and custom—the holy man takes the hand of each and unites them, pronouncing at the same time that, as each, before their God, pledges to the other to share all future joys and sorrows, to leave all others, clinging only to the one then received, they are, for all future life, husband and wife. God has joined them, through his servant, and only death must part them."

"Oh, happy, happy wife! Dear Howard, will you make me a Christian wife?"

"You have not asked me what becomes of the wife as years pass by."

"No; but tell me. Do the husband and the wife always love each other?"

"I told you, Neamata, that the father and mother were consulted when the children wish to marry. I will tell you more. The husband and the wife always are happy. Each strives to make the other so. The husband toils upon the farm, at the anvil, at the forge, is a tradesman, mechanic, an artist, or a laborer—whatever be his occupation, he gives his time and strength to provide subsistence, clothing, and the comforts, and even luxuries of their home, while the wife is gentle, loving, waiting at her home for her loved one when the toils of each day are over—always waiting with a smile, and always has prepared the grateful repast and the attendant comforts, when the tired and brain-taxed husband and father returns from his daily task."

"Oh! happy wife. But tell me, Howard, has the wife already become a mother?"

"As time passes, the wife becomes a mother, and soon is called upon to give her child in marriage, as she herself was given."

"And was my mother thus made a happy wife?"

"I doubt it not!"

"Then tell me, Howard, where I can find my father and my mother. I wish to ask them to give me their blessing, and their consent to become the wife of Howard Warren!"

"Neamata, I fear you will never see your mother again. If I am not mistaken, your father still lives, and I hope soon to restore you to his arms."

"Does not my mother still live?"

"I think she is in heaven, Neamata!"

"Was she happy with my father?"

"Yes, I think she was very happy."

"Are husbands and wives always happy?"

"All who love, may be happy; still, some are not. But come, Neamata, I must go to the lake. Our friends are to meet there. Will you go with me?"

"Anywhere with you, dear, dear Howard."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RACE FOR LIFE.

WE must now return to Archer, and his captive, Grace Ashby.

It was when Grace called for assistance, that Archer first discovered the approaching party. They were yet some distance from the cabin. The abductor evidently had made every preparation for the successful carrying out of his plans, for a smile of triumph gleamed upon his face, as he looked out upon the river. It was necessary for prompt action, however, and it was but the work of a moment for Archer to blind the eyes and mouth of Grace, as before described. He next raised a trap in the floor, and, throwing the girl into the collar, sprung in himself, and closed the door after him. He then took her in his arms as if she had been a child, and bore her along a dark passage-way, until he reached a small excavation which stood close by the water's edge.

It was from this point that he had a complete view of the approaching party, and could watch them every moment. He saw them enter the cabin, and judged by their apparent indifference, that they had not heard the voice of Grace, nor had any intimation by signs or by information of his presence in the cabin. All, then, was well for him, and he conceived himself not only safe from capture but safe in the possession of his long-expected and long-earned prize.

He had heard in the distance the report of the rifle, and when the party started on their return, he rightly judged that they were bound by the force of conflict, which he had reason to believe was, or had taken place, upon the opposite side of the river, only a few miles away.

As the darkness widened between the pursuers and the pursued, Archer removed the bandage from the eyes of Grace, and bade her look forth. She was, even then, within hearing distance of her friends, and could plainly see the retreating form of Lincoln. It was a moment of agony for her. She was unable to speak on account of the bandage over her

mouth. Before her sat her captor, gazing upon her with a smile of satisfied pride.

"What think you now, my fair one? Is the renegade easily foiled? If you are wise you will make no further resistance. You are in my power, and by all that is great, I declare that you shall be mine—legally and honestly mine. I have long loved you and I have won you as a lawful prize; therefore I shall keep you and make you a dutiful wife."

"Archer," said Grace, as he removed the obstruction from her mouth, "I have but little to say to you. I see little to hope for now; still, hope is strong within my heart. Whatever future may be in store for me I shall be true to my vows to my betrothed, and shall readily welcome death or suffering ere I will yield to your promises or your threats."

"Will you partake of food before we proceed?" asked Archer, as if not noticing her defiant manner, nor heeding her forcibly-uttered words.

"Yes, I will eat. I expect of you good usage and shall compel you to respect my wants and my privacy."

"Ha, ha! I admire your pluck, and shall take pleasure in seeing you enjoy yourself. So come along and let us have some grub in a quiet way."

Archer led the way through the narrow passage, and finally emerged into the little cabin. He raised a small trap in one corner of the room, and produced a bottle of liquor, some dried venison, and other articles of food.

"You see that I am well prepared for our journey. At intervals between here and the lake, I have food stored, and when once we are at our destination, you shall have the fare of a queen."

Grace Ashby exhibited so much firmness and self-reliance as to disturb her captor's equanimity, much as he chose to hide his discomfiture. His glance was suspicious and uneasy. He would start at the slightest sound. He betrayed a nervous haste in his actions which betokened a heart ill at ease.

Miss Ashby partook freely of the food, and also tasted of the liquor, which Archer proffered her, having first swallowed copiously himself. The meal ended, Archer rose, and taking Grace by the hand, he led her toward the river, saying, as he did so:

"We will again embark in our little canoe. It will be the easiest mode of reaching the Mississippi."

The boat was drawn from its concealment, and the two once more were floating with the stream.

"Will you tell me where we are going; or rather where you intend to carry me?" asked Grace, as the boat sped on its way.

"Well, as you can not communicate the information to any of your friends, I will tell you. I intend taking you to the head-quarters of our tribe—"

"Your tribe?" exclaimed Grace, with sarcasm.

"Well, then, if you prefer the term I will say the Sioux tribe, who are sworn to a war of extermination against the white usurpers of this part of the country. *You* and your friends call me renegade, but my friends call me 'brave,' and they trust me, because I am true to their interests. We are in force upon the banks, or, I might say, all around Mirror lake, where we are strongly fortified. Our purpose is to take all the white dogs who infest this portion of the country, prisoners, and confine them within our works. The treatment they will afterward receive, will depend entirely upon circumstances."

Few more words passed between them. The Mississippi river was reached in safety. But here a difficulty presented itself. The whites had been aroused to the importance of immediate and decided action, and as there were many renegades who crossed that section of the country, every stranger was watched with suspicion, or questioned closely.

Arthur arrived at the Mississippi just as twilight was merging into darkness. He silently pulled his canoe under the heavy growth of alders which grew dense upon the east bank, and for several hours remained silent, while he peered forth upon the broad waters of the Mississippi, which flashed in the moonlight.

Upon the bosom of the dancing waters, all appeared to be quiet.

Perhaps the sparkling waves—if wave of silver can have thoughts, and if the legendary tales of old are true, why not?—of the time when Giovanni De Soto spoke those immortal dying words, "Deep in your mighty river be my grave;

Its foam my shroud; its ceaseless voice my dirge; its everlasting wave my monument!"

De Soto, the mighty Spanish adventurer, discoverer, and hero of the Mississippi, spake these words, and, far adown in the "Father of Waters," found his grave. Others as noble in heart and mind, although less striking in character—rash in adventure, but less heralded—had found a grave as noble beneath the rippling waters which now were flashing in the moonlight, as did the favored warrior of Castile.

Archer was not a man to waver. Action was at *once* required, and he resolved to move at once. Could he but land upon the other side, all would be well. But the night-patrol had, for the last month, been very vigilant, as there had been much passing between the eastern Minnesota section and the western portion of Wisconsin. The St. Croix had been the main channel. The renegade well knew that it would be difficult to pass up the Mississippi into the Minnesota, without meeting with some person who would question him. Should this be the case, Grace Ashby would make an appeal for protection, and would most likely receive it. Besides, he was well known to many of the hunters of that vicinity, and few there were who had not sworn to take the life of the wretched traitor and villain.

Morning was approaching, and he desired to pass the river and penetrate far as possible into the interior before daylight. He began to ply the oars with great vigor, and the little canoe shot rapidly through the waters. He had nearly reached the Minnesota shore, when he discovered a man standing by the water's side. He instantly paused. Miss Ashby at the same moment discovered the stranger.

"Hallo! stranger, what are ye stoppin' for. I reckon I ain't a cut-throat, or tarnel red-skin that ye need to be afraid!"

"I am not afraid of you if you are alone," replied Archer.

Archer gazed upon him a moment, as if to measure his chances of success if an encounter should be necessary. The stranger was a man of tremendous strength, judging from his size and appearance. He was dressed in the costume of a frontier hunter. He held a long rifle in his hand, while in his belt was visible a large knife.

Miss Ashby, seeing that Archer still hesitated, determined

to make an appeal for protection. She knew not whom she was about to address, but she could not be worse off than at present; and so she said:

"Sir, whoever you are I claim your protection. This man has stolen me from my home, and is carrying me to Mirror lake. This is Jim Archer!"

The stranger gave a long, peculiar whistle, and then burst into a hearty laugh.

"Oh, ho! Jim Archer—who is he? P'raps he is hard up for a wife? Tarnal nice gal. Ain't a bit jealous, but wouldn't mind havin' just such a gal myself—well I wouldn't! I say, stranger, don't want yer property, unless we can make a fair swap. Now I've got a first class lot of furs. How'll ye trade?"

"Will you not protect me—save me from this villain's clutches?" cried Grace, as the look of hope which had at first lit up her features changed to one of despair.

"Beg yer pardon, Miss," responded the stranger, "'tain't purlike to meddle with other folks's business. Besides, I shouldn't wonder if the gentleman set lots of store by ye, and would make ye a first rate man."

"Oh, think of my wretched condition and do not refuse my prayer," she added, with tearful frenzy.

"Couldn't think of interferin'. Bring the gal ashore, stranger, and let's see if we can strike up a bargain."

Archer looked upon the speaker with evident suspicion. He took hold the ears, but with astonishing quickness raised his rifle and sent a bullet full at the breast of the man upon the bank! But he mistook his game evidently. The hunter had anticipated the movement, and by throwing himself flat upon the ground, escaped unhurt. As soon as Archer saw that he had missed his mark he seized the ears, but before he had time to move the stranger brought his ugly-looking rifle to bear upon the assassin, saying as he did so:

"See here, I never miss my mark. So just bring that gal ashore or I'll set a pill from Long Tom rite through your nasty pate."

Archer was in a measure powerless. He had discharged his own piece, and the rifle of the man whose life he had at tempted was pointed at his heart with deadly aim.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Archer.

"Wal, one thing I am going to do is to take charge of Squire Ashby's daughter! Don't be alarmed, Miss Gracie. I know you, and I know your father. Why, I only said I wouldn't interfere just to get that pirate *ashore*. But he's lost more than half his game just by emptying his shooter; and so, ye see, I'll make it all right. And, Lord, ain't I glad to get a chance to serve you and your father! Why, bless ye, don't you recollect how your dad gave me a place in his house, and how you and all the rest of them blessed female angels took such good care of me when I got scratched by one of them reds about two years ago? My name's John Billings."

"Oh! yes, I remember you well!"

As Miss Ashby spoke these words, she sprung to her feet in the excess of her joy. She had been seated in the extreme end of the canoe, but had unconsciously approached quite near to Archer in her impulsive movement. This was just what he desired. He seized the maiden, and, drawing her close to his side, and directly between himself and Billings, cried:

"Ah! you'll save her, will you? You hold the trump card do you? I doubt that. Fire, if you like."

Billings lowered his rifle, and seemed undecided how to act. Archer already had seized his oar again, and was paddling for the other shore with his one hand. Billings well knew that, if the villain was given an opportunity to reload his rifle, he would then have the decided advantage, for he could return, and hold the girl in such a manner that he would be protected, while, at the same time, he could fire with effect. It was not likely he would again miss his aim. Still the hunter resolved to save the girl.

He sprung into the water, and commenced swimming toward the boat. He gained upon it rapidly, and, as he did so, shouted most lustily for help. He had the gratification of hearing his shouts answered, and not more than forty rods above, he saw three boats leave the shore and pull rapidly toward them.

Archer was now free to act, either to reload his rifle, to rush upon Billings and dispatch him with a knife, or to pull with his great strength for the farther shore. His mind

evidently was fixed upon escape, for he began to pull vigorously for the opposite bank. Those above saw him change his direction, and they endeavored by a short cut to intercept him. Billings followed closely.

Upon a sudden Miss Ashby sprang forward and seized the renegade's rifle, throwing it into the water. The villain was now only armed with his knife.

"Good! good!" cried Billings. "Now spring into the water yourself."

She attempted to do so, but Archer seized her. He could, thence, use but one hand, and his progress was slow. The boats were not ten lengths from him, and Billings had seized one end of the canoe. Archer drew his knife, and placing it at the throat of Grace, cried:

"If one of you raise a rifle, or attempt to enter this boat, I will kill this girl upon the spot."

Archer was then but a few yards from the shore. Billings desired that he should reach it, as he could better contend with him upon the land. He therefore swam forward, pushing the boat before him. A malicious smile played around the lips of the renegade. The bank was quite steep, and the water deep near the shore.

The prow of the long canoe at length touched the bank, when Archer sprang upon it with Grace in his arms.

Billings made directly for the land, crying as he did so:

"Keep up a good heart, Miss; we've got the villain now!"

The boats also had reached the land, and the party were about to spring upon the bank, when a horrible yell was heard, and a party of nearly one hundred Indians sprung upon the whites from a place of concealment.

"Ha! ha! ha!" yelled Archer, "a trump card this time, Billings!"

Quick as thought the whites plunged into the river, and struck out for the opposite shore. The Indians poured a volley after them, but only two were wounded and one killed. Their safety was much depending upon their expertness in swimming under water, well out of rifle range.

A moment more, and a large body of men appeared upon the opposite shore. Among the foremost was easily to be recognized Lieutenant Linell.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TEST OF TRUE LOVE.

THE reader will recollect that Harry Ashby had been left wounded in the hands of the savages, when the remnant of his party were compelled to fly before the approaching Indians. Also, that, upon the return of Lieutenant Lindell, and the rescue of the sufferers from the burning elements, the body of Harry could not be found—that Minneapolis had disappeared in a mysterious manner. Let us now follow their fortunes.

Minneapolis supposed she had given the savage, Conanchet, a mortal wound, at the time he sprung into the path for the purpose of seizing her. But she was mistaken. Her aim had been good, but the ball had only grazed the temple, which, for a moment, stunned the savage, but as it did not enter the brain, or break the skull even, it caused him no serious injury. Conanchet was in the rocky ledge, concealed. It was his voice that was heard, urging the savages to a desperate resistance. He knew that assistance would soon arrive, and he had reasons for not unnecessarily exposing his life. His principal motive was to gain possession of Minneapolis.

After the retreat of the little band, Conanchet emerged from his concealment, and when he saw the form of Ashby upon the ground, and ascertained that he was only wounded, and that not mortally, the red fiend actually danced with demoniac glee. He cast around him a rapid glance, however, and, not seeing Minnie, muttered curses at her escape. He approached the wounded man, bent over him, and proceeded to stanch his flow of blood, while at the same time he gave orders to prepare the fire for burning the wounded.

"You surely would not commit an act so fiendish," said Harry Ashby.

"Would I not?" replied Conanchet, with bitterness. "You heard my command? Well, sir, when I command, I am in the habit of being obeyed. But you are not to share the fate

of the others. I shall spare your life, as I have use for you. Are you able to move, sir?"

"I can not stand. My wound is very painful."

"That is a good sign," returned Conanchet. "It is not mortal. You shall be carried as gently as possible to my destination. I strongly suspect the party upon the other side of the river will shortly return and give us battle. I do not intend to meet them here."

"Where am I to be taken, and what is your purpose with me?" asked Harry.

"I will tell you soon."

Conanchet called two powerful savages aside, and a litter was quickly formed. Harry Ashby was placed upon it, and taken from the spot. He cast a look backward at his wounded companions, and saw that they were being lashed one by one to the surrounding trees, and that dry figots were being piled around them. He groaned in his soul's anguish—not for himself, his fate was uncertain, but for the unfortunate brave men he was leaving behind.

For over a mile the party kept on their course. At length they halted. Harry had so far recovered as to be able to sit erect, and he gazed anxiously about him. Then turning to Conanchet he again asked:

"What is your purpose with me?"

"I will tell you: you are to go with me to Mirror lake. Your journey will not be a very tedious one, as I have a canoe on the river close at hand. When we reach the Mississippi, you will have a short distance to travel by land, striking the Minnesota river some few miles in the interior. You will find little effort necessary on your part, the balance of the journey."

"And what do you intend upon arriving there?"

"It is explained in a few words. I know the Indian maiden, Minnapolis, loves you. This makes me hate you. Why, you would ask? In the first place she has learned to scorn her own people by the education you and yours have given her. In the next place, I love her, and she spurns me on your account."

"If you love me," responded Ashby, "why not wreak your vengeance upon me here? Why do you wish to carry me to the lake?"

"You prate of being wise, but I think the pale-faces are fools. You can't understand my motive? Well, it is this: at the lake I am safe."

"You will not be so long."

"Ha! ha! Let the white man *dare* to come to the lake, and they will find we are prepared to receive them. Now, when you reach this place, you shall send for Minneapolis to come and attend you."

"And you?"

"Will seize her as soon as she arrives," answered Conanchet.

"You would make *me* the instrument of her capture?"

"Precisely!"

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I will burn you at the stake!"

At this instant a sound was heard which caused Conanchet to start, and gaze eagerly around him. It appeared like a half-suppressed ejaculation of terror. But, at the same moment, the ringing of rifles told the story that the rescuing party had arrived upon the late scene of action.

Conanchet lifted Harry in his arms, and placing him in a canoe which he drew from concealment, sprung in himself, and darted out upon the waters. He was followed by the two savages who had assisted him, in a second boat.

What of Minneapolis?

When Harry Ashby ordered the remnant of his party to fall back before the approaching enemy, all of his comrades supposed that he was mortally wounded, and that their presence would really avail him nothing. Dawson had been ordered to take Minnie with him, but in the hurry of their flight, they did not observe that she accompanied them but a short way, and then sprung to a place of effective concealment.

From her hiding-place she could observe all the movements of the savages. She had resolved to remain near Harry, ready to take advantage of any chance to assist in his escape, or to render any other service in her power. But her heart began to sink within her as she saw the preparations for burning the wounded. She had every reason to believe that her lover would share the fate of the others, but she resolved if

she could not save him, she would at least be revenged upon Conanchet, even if her own life paid the forfeit.

It was not long, however, before her fears were relieved, by seeing Harry borne from the spot, as before described. Cautiously she followed, avoiding, with great sagacity, being observed by the savages. She felt that she was in some way connected with this action of Conanchet, and when the party paused, she crept with the stealth of a shadow close enough to hear every word spoken, and was thus made aware of the intentions of the Indian. It was when the allusion to the burning of her lover was made, that an exclamation of horror escaped her, which nearly proved her ruin. But, as fortune ordered, the sound of the firing turned the attention of Conanchet to what, to him, was of greater importance, his own escape. Minnie saw her lover placed in the boat. Once her revolver was drawn, but she quickly reflected that if she killed Conanchet it would not save Harry, as the other Indians would instantly dispatch him. She knew the direction they would take, and their ultimate destination, and entertained strong hopes of his rescue. She at once started for the place where the firing was heard, to seek for assistance. There she found Lieutenant Lindell and his party victorious. She related all the particulars, and received a promise that, as soon as he could dispose of the wounded and dead, he would start in immediate pursuit. With this assurance Minnie was satisfied, and, without a moment's delay, started off in the direction taken by Conanchet. All the day she sped onward without overtaking the canoe, and at length began to fear that the savage had changed his intentions. But as night approached she saw the boats.

It was nearly midnight when Minnie beheld the boats shoot out into the Mississippi, and make toward the Minnesota shore. Here was an obstacle to be overcome. How was she to cross the river? She ran rapidly along the bank—her sharp eyes scrutinizing every "cover." Soon a canoe was discovered concealed among the willow undergrowth. Into this she slipped, but to her disappointment found the oar broken in its blade. But she did not hesitate to put out with the half oar, and found so much dexterity managing the craft, that, by the time she had reached the Minnesota shore, she had been carried

with the current nearly two miles down the stream, and had entirely lost sight of the savages.

Immediately the tireless creature began to retrace her steps, and soon arrived near the place where Conanchet had crossed. But she saw nothing of the boats nor of the Indians. Knowing nearly the direction of the Minnesota river, onward she went.

Suddenly she came into an open space from the dense wood through which she was passing, and found herself among a number of sleeping Indians. With true forest instinct she dropped to the ground, and was unperceived. A short distance from her, she heard voices, and saw a group of savages in conversation. She was satisfied that they were not aware of her presence. She knew by the painted faces of the sleepers near her that it was a war-party, and she saw that their numbers were large. Whether Conanchet had joined this party or not, she could not tell, but she determined to ascertain, if possible. It was too dangerous an experiment to attempt to make the circuit of their camp. Minnie therefore crawled as carefully as possible into the thick wood, which she had scarcely reached when shouts were heard which appeared to come from the river. The moon was shining brightly, and she could distinctly see the Indians in the opening spring to their feet, although the shadows of the dense wood rendered her own position comparatively safe. However, she prostrated herself closely as possible beside a large log, and awaited the action of the savages. It was well that she did so, for, in a moment, they were passing directly by her, on their way toward the river. Eagerly she watched to ascertain if her lover was with them, but she did not see him, and so felt convinced that Conanchet must have gone directly forward. Still, to be certain of this, she cautiously followed the savages at a safe distance. She saw the Indians conceal themselves near the river-bank, and, reaching the river herself at a point considerably above that taken by them, she beheld the boat which contained Archer and Miss Ashby, and witnessed the scene we have before described. She also detected the boats containing the white people approaching the spot where the Indians were concealed, and instantly started to warn them of their danger. But the canoes were

so near the place that she could not reach them in time to warn them back, when to discover her presence would have been fatal to her own safety. It was a great relief to her mind when she saw the soldiers under the command of Lindell, appear upon the opposite bank. Knowing that she could be of no service if she remained longer, she started at once in the direction of the Minnesota river.

For many hours the faithful girl continued her journey, and finally was rewarded by the sight of her lover and his captors. How she longed to do something to let Harry know that she was near him! But prudence warned her against any exposure.

At length they neared the shore. Conanchet gazed cautiously around him, and then struck into a narrow stream that Minnie judged to be the outlet of the lake which was the destination of Conanchet. Once or twice Minnie had almost determined to send a bullet through the head of her lover's captor, and then to trust to her good revolver to dispatch the two other savages. For her beloved she could do and dare any thing. The stream was so narrow that she could easily spring into the boat, and she hoped that so sudden and unexpected an attack would succeed. But she had three to contend with, and the odds appeared too great; besides, she felt sure that Lindell and his friends would arrive in a few hours, and that Harry would be rescued.

At length Conanchet landed. To her joy, she saw that her lover was able to walk, and she felt satisfied that the wound was not so severe as she had at first supposed. In a moment more they emerged into an open space, and Minnie saw the lake and the rude fortifications around it.

The lake was indeed a lovely sheet of water. It was clear as crystal, and the waters shone like polished silver in the bright sunlight of that lovely June morning, while not even a ripple was to be seen upon its surface save in the wake of a tiny white canoe, which was gliding over its bosom. It was rightly named "Mirror lake." The lake is nearly round, and its shores are fringed with the forest lands, many of whose branches overhang the sparkling waters, and are reflected back even more beautiful than nature painted them. It appeared almost like a place of enchantment. Oh, that such a

scene should be marred by mortal strife ! Oh, that the pure deeps should reflect in the same moment the blue face of heaven in all its purity, and the red glare of battle in all its horrors ! Oh, that such a forest, beautiful in natural grandeur, where now were ringing forth the notes of heavenly songsters, should echo with the din of battle, and the groans of mangled men !

Visible among the trees were to be seen a number of huts, and log fortifications. This had been selected as the headquarters for the Indians in middle Minnesota. Their rude works, naturally strong, were rendered doubly so, as they had to be approached through miles of dense forest. But little activity was visible in their camp ; hence Minnie judged that most of the warriors were absent. There were present, however, a large number of women and children, and several old men. Some were reclining upon the border of the lake, while others were fishing, and still others darting about in their light canoes, in sport, or in practice.

Conanchet led Harry Ashby along through the only open space near the lake, until he reached a strong work of logs, close to the edge of the forest. Here he was seated. Minnie crept as closely to the spot as was safe, but near enough to hear the conversation. Considerable curiosity was exhibited by the Indians who had gathered around.

"I am glad to see you so far recovered," said Conanchet, addressing Harry Ashby.

"Why are you glad?" asked Harry.

Conanchet gave a low laugh, and turning to those around him, said :

"Zo gang che Minneapolis billot Chowwewunk pu tol !"

"This is the pale dog who stole Minneapolis, the gift of the Great Spirit !"

A most fiendish yell was given by those around, as they heard this announcement. They rushed upon the wounded man with their weapons, and would have dispatched him at once, had not Conanchet driven them back.

"Not yet, friends," he exclaimed. Then turning to Harry he said : -

"Sir, you see I am no common savage. I command to be obeyed. And more, I possess what you would little expect to find in a place like this, facilities for writing. They came

into my possession in this manner: I burnt a white dog to that stake. You see the black mass. Well, before he died he gave me a book, or rather I took it from him. He had written something in it, but, as my education don't extend to *reading*, I never have been able to make out its contents."

Conanchoet entered the log fort, and soon returned with a small blank book, a small pocket ink stand, and a pen.

"I have been inclined more than once to pitch this thing into the lake, as it was useless to me, but now I am glad that I did not. Here, take this book, and write."

"What would you have me write?" asked Harry.

"That you are safe, although so badly wounded that you can not be moved. Say that you are at the house of a friend upon the Minnesota river, situated on the point of rocks, just above Eagle's Nest. Request Minneapolis to come to you immediately."

"What is your motive for having me write this?" asked Harry.

"Fool! Of course it is to gain possession of the girl!"

"Perhaps not so much of a fool after all," replied Harry, with much spirit. "I knew your object was to gain possession of Minneapolis. But you do not for a moment suppose she would come alone? No; so large a force would come with her, that if you should attempt to take her, you would be crushed."

"And do you imagine I will not guard against that? I have not told you all that you must write."

"Well, go on," replied Ashby.

"You must write that you are at the house of a man called Perkins. That the Indians are friendly toward him, and will not molest himself or family so long as he takes no part with the whites. But if they ascertain that he has befriended you, it will bring trouble upon him. Should a large party come for you, he will be suspected at once. Therefore, for the safety of your friend Perkins, Minneapolis must come *alone*, or, at least, only bring one or two with her!"

"Is there any such person as Perkins?" asked Harry.

"No!"

"I will not write!"

"Tie him to that stake, and roast the white log alive!"

yelled Conanchet, as he stamped and foamed with wild passion.

A yell of savage delight went up from those around, in anticipation of what, to them, was an amusement. Harry Ashby was instantly seized and bound to a post set firmly in the ground, and which already bore the marks of fire. It was but a few moments before pine knots and dry timber were piled around the victim. When the arrangements were complete, Conanchet himself stepped forward with a flaming torch.

"Will you write?" he again asked.

"*I will!*" responded Harry. "Release my hands."

Conanchet released the hands of the prisoner, but left him otherwise, still bound to the stake. He then handed the book to Harry, together with the pen and ink. Harry took the book and opened it. He gazed upon the writing with apparent interest, and then raised his eyes to those of Conanchet.

"Well, why are you looking so earnestly upon me?" asked the Indian.

"Because this writing concerns you."

"What is it?"

"It is written here that you will be *killed* while in the act of burning some prisoner at the stake!"

Conanchet started and looked eagerly around him. Then recovering himself, he said:

"You need not think to work upon my fears. I am not as superstitious as you may suppose. Besides, I do not believe that there are any such words in that book."

"Read for yourself," said Harry, extending him the book.

"*I can not read!*" replied the Indian.

"Then let some one who *will* believe read it for you."

"*No one here can read!*"

"Well, dictate and I will write," said Harry, as he pretended to do so.

Conanchet went on to repeat the instructions he had before given, and Harry wrote, apparently, as instructed. Perhaps it is not necessary to say that the words which he did pen were *not* those dictated by the chief. On the contrary, having by his ruse ascertained that none of the savages could read, he fully informed his friends of his own situation, as of Conanchet's designs upon Minnie.

But the savage, having once obtained the message, evidently was not satisfied, for, having conferred with some of the old men, he advanced to the stake, and deliberately put the torch to the brushwood around. Then he stood with folded arms, gazing upon Harry, with a fiendish gleam lighting up his hideous face, until he looked the very impersonation of a human tiger.

His moment of triumph was brief. A sharp report from the thicket near at hand told Conanchet's fate. A crimson stream spirted from his bare bosom. He dashed his hand suddenly over his breast, closed his eyes and fell forward, his face striking in the little mass of flame which his hand had lit. Then a figure glided, like a spirit, out of the wood, up to the post, and, with a glittering knife, sundered the thongs of the captive. In a moment, ere the affrighted and astonished throng around were aware, the prisoner was free, and, without a word, went bounding off through the forest, preceded by the female spirit who had cut the cruel thongs which bound him to the death-pyre.

CHAPTER · X. ·

THE LOVERS—AN ENEMY—STRATAGEM—RECAPTURE.

THERE are old legends extant in the Indian and frontier countries, of fairies—the departed spirits of loved friends—who watch over us, guarding, to a great extent, dear ones from danger. This is the religion of the savage, and there are many women and hunters who fully believe in its truth.

So when the form of Minneapolis, so fair, so sudden and so unaccountable, glided from among the trees to the rescue of the prisoner, it is not strange that the rude children of the forest looked upon it as a supernatural interposition of the protecting angel which was ever hovering around the person of young Ashby. At all events, there was no attempt on the part of the savages to interfere with the movements of the mysterious visitor.

Harry Ashby did not enter into this belief, and yet he could but feel a kind of superstitious awe. He was far from friends, and that any protecting friends, either visionary or substantial, could possibly be hovering near, was a thing incredible. The smoke which was curling around him had bedimmed his vision so far, that only a form, resembling a female, flitted before him, while the features were not distinguishable. But he believed he had been preserved by *human* agency. It is not an unusual occurrence for the dark maiden of the forest to become, even at first sight, smitten with the pale-face. When such was the fact, they never failed to render valuable aid, in moments of danger, as our border history will attest. Harry had but a moment for thought, but that moment was sufficient for him to arrive at the conclusion that some female, feeling pity for his situation, had adopted this bold method for his rescue. But an Indian maid would hardly have went so far as to kill the great chief. Indeed, the young man was puzzled. Still he lost no time, and a moment more saw him dashing like a deer through the forest, after the retreating form. She glided like a fairy before him, now dashing among the heavy timber, and becoming entirely lost to view, and then appearing in the distance, varying her course with wonderful acuteness, but bearing steadily toward the river. In vain he attempted to overtake her. She flitted like a shadow before him.

As he pressed forward he heard a voice, which came from out a thick undergrowth near at hand.

"Harry! Harry! Quick! There's danger ahead!"

Ashby recognized the voice, and with a cry he sprung into the thicket and clasped Minnie to his bosom.

"Dear Minnie," he exclaimed, as he pressed the weeping maiden close to his heart, "why are *you* here?"

Minneapolis had encountered much, and while her lover remained a prisoner her heart was firm. She thought not of herself, but watched and hoped for some chance of rescue, failing in which, she had determined to die with him. But now that Harry was free—that the most imminent danger had passed—her pent-up emotions found vent in tears and sobs, which her lover vainly sought to check. At length she exclaimed;

"Oh, Harry, I have for a moment forgotten myself. The joy I felt in holding you once more in my arms, in hearing your kind voice, drove from my mind all thought but the present heaven of bliss. But there is danger yet."

"True. We are not yet out of the Indians' reach, but with proper caution I think we shall be able to find the river, where we shall certainly meet friends. My greatest solicitude is for yourself, Minnie. Why did you follow me?"

Minnie went on to relate all that had occurred since he supposed she had left him to accompany the defeated and flying band.

"And do you think we may expect assistance soon?" asked Harry.

"I do. Lieutenant Linell is informed of the direction Comanche intended taking. Cap. du Warren is also at work. I should not be surprised if the savage stronghold is taken before this day is passed."

"Minnie, is your rifle loaded?"

"It shall be in a moment."

The piece was charged with great skill, showing how well trained the girl was in the use of the deadly weapon. Her gun was one of exquisite workmanship, and though very light in its structure was of great power of range. It was ever at her hand when in the woods, being carried at her back by a strap passing over the shoulder. The beautiful revolver which, in the times of peril, was carried, as well as her sheathed knife, in her girlish belt, was her chief reliance, however, and she used it with astonishing skill.

"Give it to me, Minnie."

"Harry!" and the maiden clung close to her lover. "Is there danger here, Harry? Are we discovered?"

"You spoke of danger a moment since."

"I fancied I saw a dark form gliding among the trees. But it might have been but a shadow."

"No, Minnie, it was not a shadow, but substance of an ugly character."

"What have you seen, Harry?"

"The form of a powerful savage."

"Where?"

"A moment since it emerged from behind that large oak

yonder, and crept cautiously along the ground. He is now concealed behind that fallen tree. We are, you perceive, at his mercy in remaining here."

"If he is an enemy would he not fire upon us?"

"No; the thick bushes around give us partial shelter from immediate aim. Besides, you have been sitting directly between me and him. Here, Minnie, move cautiously back behind that big bowlder, which offers us a real front protection."

This was done. The young girl crouched low, and moved backward with the stillness of light.

"Is there more than one of the savages, Harry?"

"I believe I am right in thinking there is only one. Had there been more, that savage would have discharged his piece at me, thinking to draw my fire under the impression that I had only to face an enemy with an empty gun. There! You see he is attempting to draw my fire. "Do you not see the top of his head just above that log?"

"Ah, yes. Give me the rifle. I can reach him."

"Do you fear *my* aim, Minnie?"

"No, but your wound, Harry?"

"Will not interfere with the accuracy of my aim. Besides, Minnie, you are a much better huntress than warrior. That is simply a ruse of the savage to draw my fire."

"I do not understand you, Harry."

"There is no *head* visible. It is only the head-dress of the savage which you see. If I should fire he would come bounding forward and make the attack before I could reload."

"What will we do?"

"There is but one thing that can be done with certainty of success. That is to outwit the tiger."

"How can you do this?"

"I shall try various methods. You see there is a small ravine running around in a circle to the right. I think I can creep cautiously through this ravine until I reach a spot which, from here, appears to run directly under the fallen tree by which he is secreted. If I can do this without being discovered, success is certain. But I shall first try other experiments."

"What else can you try with any prospect of success?"

That Indian is, doubtless, as artful as the best, and you need be very sharp to outwit him."

"Never fear. If the fellow can speak English, I shall have him."

Harry then called to the savage, saying that he was a friend, and bade him come forward. This elicited no reply.

"Indian want whisky?" asked Ashby.

"Ugh."

"Good whisky."

"Good. Ugh."

"Indian may have whisky if he is a friend."

"Me friend. Give Indian whisky."

"Indian come and get it," said Harry.

"Ugh. Me no come. Show Indian bottle."

"This plan will not do, Minnie," whispered Harry. "We have no bottle, or any thing by which we might deceive him. He will not trust us, and it is evident we can not trust him."

"What do you intend doing now?"

"I shall endeavor to get in a position where I can bring my rifle to bear upon him, by crawling through the ravine."

"It is a dangerous experiment, for I do not think it is deep enough to thoroughly conceal you."

"With your assistance, I think I can accomplish it."

"What can I do, Harry?"

"You will take my hat. Show it above the rock every few moments. Be careful not to raise it so high that the savage will see your hand. He will think this a trick to draw his fire, but it will show signs of our still being behind the rock, and divert his attention from me."

"Well, go, Harry, but be careful."

Minnie took the hat as directed, and raised it in such a manner that the Indian could distinctly see one-half the crown. But this had no other effect than that intended, as the savage well understood the ruse. This was repeated at intervals, according to instructions.

Young Ashby crept cautiously along the ravine. It was with the greatest difficulty that he prevented the waving of the thick undergrowth or the cracking of the twigs, which would have revealed to the savage his approach. His passage was, in consequence, very slow.

He had reached a point where a jutting rock and a short bend in the ravine hid from view the passage-way beyond. But, he had every reason to suppose that the fallen tree could not be more than fifteen or twenty feet further. Every thing was as quiet as the grave. He moved forward, but, as he turned this point, he met the savage face to face. He, also, had discovered the ravine, and had hit upon the same plan for reaching his enemy as that adopted by Harry.

As they met, each attempted to raise his rifle, but the distance between them was too short for either to use their piece. Harry saw the savage reach for his knife. He had left his own with Minnie, in case the savage should advance upon her. Not a moment could be lost. He caught his enemy by the throat, and clung to him with all his might. But he was no match for his foe in physical strength, even had he not been suffering from the effects of his wound.

The savage set up a series of whoops as he discovered the fact that his enemy had not even so much as a knife. With an effort he raised Harry high in the air, and hurled him, as if he had been a child, several feet from the spot. The savage then raised his gun and brought it directly to bear upon the young man. The latter bent his head, and as all further resistance seemed useless, resigned himself to his fate. There was a moment of silence, and then the savage said :

"Give Indian whisky!" There was no reply, and he added, in a louder and harsher tone :

"Give Indian whisky!"

"I have none," replied Harry.

"Pale-face lying dog!" added the savage. "Want kill Indian. What pale-face expect."

At this moment there was a succession of sharp reports, and the savage sprung to his feet with a yell, placing his hand upon the side of his face.

Minnie, discovering the sudden retreat of the savage to the ravine, divined his purpose and Harry's danger. She therefore followed quickly and arrived at the critical moment. Her revolver was drawn and the ball sped on its way; but in her intense excitement and haste, her aim had been far from sure: the entire contents of the weapon was discharged at the retreating savage, but not a ball took effect! Only one grazed

the bronze face, cutting a furrow from which the blood spouted, but doing no serious injury. The Indian glared upon her with fury, while he kept his rifle ready for instant use.

"Squaw hurt Indian?" he said, at length, in a peculiar tone. Minnie did not answer. There was something in the quiet manner of the savage, which sent a shudder through her frame. She would have preferred to see rage in its place.

"Squaw throw down knife!" Minnie did not do as commanded, and the savage turned the muzzle of his gun upon Harry, and said:

"Throw down knife or Indian kill pale-face." Minnie did as directed.

"Squaw sit down. There." The maiden seated herself upon the ground a short distance from Harry. The Indian also seated himself, and gazed alternately upon one and then the other. A malicious smile rested upon his face, and once or twice he raised his rifle, as if about to dispatch his enemy; but then he would lower it again. At length he said:

"Ugh! Pale-face liar! cheat! thief!"

"No! Pale-face has been good to poor squaw."

"Ugh! Make her wife?"

"Yes."

"Pale-face must die. Pale-face steal squaw, murder old man, kill warrior, and now must die. Burn!"

At this moment the captives observed the approach of a party of Indians from the direction of the stronghold. They were cautious in their movements, evidently being afraid of the maiden, for, not noticing the others, they cast suspicious glances at her, keeping under the cover of the neighboring trees. An idea appeared to strike Minnie, for she sprang to her feet, and exclaimed in the Indian dialect:

"You need not fear to approach. The Great Spirit will not harm you if you are friends?" This appeared to encourage them, for they advanced slowly. Minnie continued:

"The medicine man will forgive you and cure your sick, if you are his friends!" She pointed to Harry.

It is a well-known fact that the Indians have the highest respect for skilled physicians or surgeons, and when cures are performed by such, even although the knowledge required in accomplishing it be vastly inferior to their own, they are

almost worshiped. So, at the mention of the word "medicine-man," the savages came around and gazed curiously upon Harry. The manner of his release, the secret shot which had killed Conanchet, and the glimpse of the female that had glided to his release when it was supposed that none were near, went to confirm the belief that he must have received the assistance of some spirit. A conversation of a few moments was carried on between the savages and the one with whom Harry had just been contending, and the black frowns of the latter, and his rather violent gestures, were proof to him that he did not so readily enter into the opinions of those just arrived. At length he turned to Minnie, and indicating that he referred to Harry, he asked :

"He medicine-man?"

"Yes," answered Minnie.

"Want medicine-man to cure wound you made." The savage pointed to his cheek.

Here was an embarrassing situation. Harry had not even so much as a pocket-knife with him, or any thing to use as a surgical instrument. But he quickly resolved upon a plan. Picking up the knife which Minnie had thrown aside, and drawing from his pocket a handkerchief, he scraped from it some lint, and then cut it into strips. He thought if he could get close to the savage, he might use the knife upon him, and, once rid of him, he was confident the others could be awed into submission.

But here, too, he was mistaken. For, at that moment another savage joined the party, who knew both Harry and Minnie personally. The fact that Minnie resided upon the St. Croix with the Ashbys, and that her lover was one of the party wounded and taken prisoner, was soon made known. The lovers, therefore, soon found themselves back in the Indian stronghold, and were doomed to witness the preparations which were at once commenced for burning them both at the stake, which sentence had been pronounced upon them by the old men of the tribe in less than an hour after their return.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW-FOUND JOY.

AFTER the conversation between Captain Warren and Neamata, they started for the general rendezvous, Mirror lake. They had nearly reached the Mississippi river, when Warren was met by one whom he instantly recognized.

"Ah! Willard," he said, "you appear agitated. What is the matter?"

"Why the very deuce is to pay generally. The reds are out in strong force, and raisin' Cain. There's over a hundred just across the river, and as many more on this side, not two miles from here. Lieutenant Lindell is on this side, with over a hundred of the boys, and you may look for fun before the sun goes down."

"Let us hasten at once to the support of Lindell. If he has only half the number of men the Indians have, his position is a dangerous one."

"Oh! don't be alarmed, Captain Warren. Billings is around, and his men are collecting at the rate of twenty every hour. He'll have a hundred good 'ens in the course of the day. And you've got something to do. The boys at the bridge got together last night. There's a hundred and thirty on 'em, and they want Captain Warren to come and take command. Just at that moment a ugly lookin' chap, but whose heart is in the right place, came along, and he told us that you had started for the lake, but that he was ahead, and if some one would go out on the pigeon-trail and wait a little, they'd probably find you. So the boys concluded to wait for you two hours, and then if we didn't find you to start."

"Who is this person you speak of?"

"I believe his name is Hill."

"Did he give you any instructions?"

"Well, not exactly instructions, but he told us if we didn't find you, that Joe Britton better take command, that we should cross the river three or four miles below, and come up behind the reds which are on the other side, while Lindell and Billings attacked them in front."

"Well, I will go at once."

At this moment, Hill approached. Neamata started in fright when she saw him, and a look of agony crossed the features of Hill, as he exclaimed:

"Ever thus. Every living being shuns me."

"Neamata," said Warren, stepping forward and taking her hand, "do not fear this gentleman. He is good. He once had children whom he loved, and who loved him. He was living happily, as Christians live, when the Indians came upon him, killed his wife and children, and, by their cruelty to him, caused this deformity. He was once erect and perfect as any man. He is my friend, Neamata, and I hope you will consider his misfortune, and love him for my sake."

"Oh! yes, I will, dear Howard," said Neamata. Then turning to Hill, she said:

"Did you have a Christian wife?"

"I have been instructing Neamata with regard to the modes of civilized life, and teaching her the difference between the savage wife, and the wife of the white man. She calls all white wives Christians," said Warren.

"Yes, poor child," said Hill, tenderly, "mine was indeed a Christian wife. But she is with the angels now."

"Is she up there?" asked Neamata, pointing to the skies.

"She is."

"You loved her, did you not?"

Hill bowed his head and wept. When Neamata saw this, she gently took his hand and said:

"Don't weep. It makes Neamata unhappy to see you weep."

"Yes," said Hill, "I did truly love my wife."

"And did she love you?"

"Yes, very, very much."

"As much as I love Howard?"

"I think as much."

"Don't you want to go to heaven and join your wife? It must be bright and beautiful there."

"Yes, Neamata, I do wish to go there, but not until my mission upon the earth is accomplished."

"Perhaps you have children here whom you love."

"No, Neamata; wife, children, all that were dear are lost to me in this world, and while I live it must be in sorrow."

"Oh, no; you must not sorrow. You will see your wife and children when you get up there. And while I am with you I will love you, and will be happy to be your daughter."

"Could you love me, Neamata?" asked Hill, tears starting to his eyes.

"Oh, yes," answered the gentle girl, "I *do* love you now; you speak so kind, so like my Howard, and I feel so sorry for you. But if I become your daughter you will consent that I become the Christian wife of Howard, won't you?"

"He is worthy," replied Hill, solemnly, "worthy of all your love and trust."

"Come, come," said Warren, who had been listening attentively to the conversation, "we lose time. I must at once to the bridge, and shall cross below. Mr. Hill, I shall place Neamata in your charge. Join Lieutenant Lindell, but keep her from danger as you value life and my happiness. The savages will fall back, and the battle which will rid us of these troubles will take place at Mirror lake. I shall scour the country and get more help. We will have five hundred men to oppose Conauclot at the lake, and, with that number, victory will be an easy matter."

"And must I leave you, Howard?" asked Neamata.

"Yes, you have a duty to perform as well as myself. I will raise the men below. You must go above. Mr. Hill will go with you. But on your route sound your bugle in every valley and upon every hill. I have sent messengers to instruct our friends as to the meaning of the signal, and whenever it is heard you will see the farmer leave his plow, seize his rifle, and start for 'Eagle Rock,' not far from the lake. Here we will all meet, form, and then attack the savages."

Without another word Warren started off, followed by Wilbur, leaving Hill and Neamata alone.

"Well, my daughter," said Hill, after gazing upon her for a few moments, "we must set about our task now. This is the direction we must take."

"Oh, how happy it makes me to hear you call me 'daughter,'" said Neamata, as she gazed tenderly upon the poor hunchback. "It makes me doubly happy! Just to think—a Christian wife and a Christian daughter! Oh, it is blessed! Are you happy, my father, in having found a daughter?"

It is an affecting sight to see a brave man weep. We all know that tears often deaden the fires which are burning the heart and searing the brain. There are different qualities of tears. Some are those wrung from excessive physical suffering; some from mental anguish; some from excess of joyful surprise, and some the surroundings of the present, or present words or acts which remind one of a sorrowful past. I have seen a sympathetic woman take a little picture from a child, or open an infant's colored toy-book, and, gazing upon it, burst into tears. Is it surprising that she should do so? Well, to *some* it is unaccountable. To them the little picture is *only* a child, and its little "black-and-tan" gamboling play-fellow over the grassy lawn in front of its own sweet cottage, is but a symbol of what was. And as for the picture-book, why, it is only "Mother Hubbard and her dog!" Ah, they only see the child, its little dog, and the surrounding beauty, while the sorrowing heart sees *her own child there!* She sees before her the picture, the reality of which has so often delighted her, but which she will see no more, as her child has gone to Him who said "suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But the recollection of the past is renewed by that simple picture, the wound of the heart opened afresh, the soul wells up, and the tears flow. God bless the mother or the father who is not ashamed to weep!

Hill wept when he listened to the words of Neamata. The past was so vividly brought back, by her childlike language, that he could almost fancy one of his own darling ones really standing by his side. It was sweet to dream thus, but still it was *only* a dream.

Hill now began to look for some means to cross the St. Croix, as it was to this point they had been instructed to proceed. A boat was ere long secured, and the crossing effected. Hill had also another motive in doing this. He knew that between him and the party of Lieutenant Lindell there was a large number of Indians, unless they had crossed the Mississippi some distance below, after ascertaining that the whites were too strong for them.

While pursuing their journey, Hill related to Neamata the story of that dreadful night, and how he lost all in the world

that he held dear. Neamata listened with painful interest and seemed to cling the closer to the poor hunchback.

They had proceeded some miles from the river, and had arrived in a small settlement known as Wright's Inlet. The bugle-blast rang out, but was only answered by the appearance of women and children.

"Where are your men?" asked Hill.

"Why, don't you know?" answered one of the women. "There's been a dreadful fight about an hour ago down at the junction of the St. Croix and Mississippi. The boys heard the rattle of the rifles, and so they seized their guns and started."

"Have you heard the result of the battle?" asked Hill.

"Licked, sartin."

"Who is licked?"

"Why, the reds, of course. I tell you, blood's up. You can't find a well man in these parts. They've just all left, swearing vengeance on the reds. If they don't catch 'em all here, they are to all meet at 'Eagle Rock,' and then march on to the lake and exterminate the whole tribe."

"You are giving important information. How do you know we are friends?"

"How do I know? Lord bless you; the very fact of your being with that angel is proof that you are all right."

"You know her, then?" asked Hill.

"Gages we do know her, though we never clapped eyes on her afore. Why, it really does one good to look at her. Didn't she go up the valley only about a week ago, blowing that silver thing that she carries by her side? At first folks didn't know exactly what it meant. But they soon found out that it meant the reds were coming, and that we must be on guard and ready to meet 'em. And, last night, a man came here and said if we heard the same sound again, drop every thing but the knife and rifle, and rush at once to Eagle Rock. But you mustn't blow it any more around these parts, for the reds are all off, and likely will be to the rock before you are."

Without waiting further information, Hill started for the Mississippi, which he soon reached, in company with Neamata. He found that the battle was over, and that the Indians

had been badly beaten, and were in full retreat for their stronghold. As parties were constantly crossing the river, he found no difficulty in reaching the Minnesota shore, and, in company with others, started for Eagle Rock.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRATAGEM AND THE SURPRISE.

AFTER Archer found himself safe among his Indian friends, he seated himself upon the bank, and forced Miss Ashby to sit beside him. When he saw how little effect the shots of the savages had upon those who were endeavoring to escape, he growled his disapprobation ; but, when he saw the strong body of whites appear upon the opposite shore, he gave vent to a scornful laugh, and, pointing to them, he said :

"Miss Grace, do you see your lover, Lieutenant Lindell, upon the other side?"

"I do," she replied, "and I think he will soon be on *this* side."

"Little good will that do you."

"And why not?"

"Because I shall leave at once for the stronghold on the lake. With so precious a charge as yourself I shall not remain to participate in a fight. And if your lover and his crew dare attempt to follow us up, not a man of them will ever reach the lake alive, unless he goes there a prisoner."

The distance across the Mississippi, at this point, was scarcely within long rifle-range. Yet, those upon the opposite shore had tried their rifles, and a few bullets fell harmless near the spot where Archer was sitting. As if further to torture Lindell, the villain rose to his feet, and, holding Grace before him, he shouted :

"Lindell, fire away. Here's your mark!"

There was a sudden movement among Lindell's men, and then a reply came :

"Grace, we will be with you soon."

The voice she at once recognized as that of her lover.

Archer responded :

"Yes, Lindell, we will meet soon if you dare attempt a crossing. But remember that *I* shall be in the thickest of the fight, and that where I am she will also be, and before you shall again get possession of her, I will stab her to the heart. I shall keep her as long as she is alive. You shall only have her dead."

These words were spoken to deceive Lindell, or to give him pain, for Archer at once set out for the lake, leaving the Indians still upon the river-bank. Fearing the white scouts if he took the Minnesota river route or trail, he wound his way through the dense forest in a direct line.

The Indians sat quietly upon the bank, watching the movements of the whites. Another squad soon joined them, which addition gave the savages about one hundred and fifty. These knew, also, that another band of one hundred had recently gone up the St. Croix, and were confident that these would soon join them. This would swell their number to a strength which would render their victory over their assailants certain. They knew not how the ranks of that hundred, which had proceeded up the St. Croix only about one week before, had been thinned in the different engagements. They took care, however, not to show their whole force, but kept a large portion of it concealed. They could plainly see the number of the whites, and it was their intention to induce their foes to attempt a crossing.

The faces of the savages darkened, however, as they saw squad after squad arrive and join their enemies, until their number could be little less than two hundred.

At length the St. Croix band arrived, having crossed some distance below. They had left with over an hundred hardy warriors, and had now returned with less than half that number, and without a captive or a scalp! A few words of explanation were spoken between the leaders, and then a terrific yell of rage rang across the water. Still their number was now about two hundred, and, holding the advantage of ground, the Indians determined to fight.

Lindell now began to move his command down the river.

keeping close to the water's edge. The Indians followed upon the other side, keeping directly opposite the whites. At length he came upon a huge raft of logs, made ready by some hardy pioneer to float down-stream "for a market." It was just the transport needed, and upon it Lindell at once embarked his men. The float was carried slowly down with the current, but gradually approached the other shore. The Indians kept directly opposite, but did not fire. It evidently was their intention to reserve their fire until the last moment, in order to make every shot tell.

The raft had now nearly reached the shore, and the savages were standing close by a mass of rocks, when, upon a sudden, a murderous fire was poured upon them, and Captain Warren, springing from concealment, cried:

"Fire, lieutenant, and then charge."

Those on the float now poured a deadly volley upon the panic-stricken savages, and then springing into the water, dashed for the shore. The men under Warren had crossed below, and had awaited the approach of the red "braves" in concealment. They sprung from their hiding-places, and charged upon their foe. Nearly a hundred Indians had fallen, either killed or wounded, and the remainder, finding themselves confronted by such fearful odds, took to instant and rapid flight.

"Quick, follow them," cried Warren.

An exciting chase now began. The Indians were more fleet of foot than the white men, and gradually gained on their pursuers. Occasionally a practiced hunter would manage to load his rifle while running, and, simultaneous with its report, an Indian would leap into the air with a wild yell, and fall to the ground.

For many miles the exciting chase was continued. The red-men were scarcely half a mile ahead, when they arrived at a place called "Point of Rocks," or "Eagle Rock." The name, "Point of Rocks," indicated the nature of the place. It is a sharp, rocky ledge, extending from a ridge of hills almost into the Minnesota river.

As the fugitives turned this point they were received by another deadly volley, as unexpected as the first. Those who had started singly, or in small squads, for Eagle Rock, had

arrived, and now numbered nearly fifty. They had seen the approach of the Indians, and had given them a warm reception. Nearly twenty more bit the dust, and the balance of the party, now only about twenty-five, darted into the thick woods and ran toward the lake.

The entire number of the pursuing bands soon arrived at the rock, and formed nearly three hundred strong. It was determined to charge their enemy's stronghold at once, as it was supposed that Harry Ashby, Grace Ashby, and most likely Minneapolis, were prisoners there, since the latter had not been seen since she reported to Lieutenant Lindell that Ashby was a prisoner, while Miss Ashby had been seen that morning upon the river-bank with Archer. The party at once started for the lake.

We may now return to the recaptured Harry and Minneapolis.

When they reached the camp at the lake, preparations were at once made to burn them both at the stake. The infuriated savages, male and female, could scarcely be restrained from killing the offending girl on the spot, for the murder of their chief. The lovers resigned themselves to a fate which, seemingly, no human agency could now avert. The fagots were rapidly gathered and arranged around the captives, who were bound at one stake. All the village was alive with excitement. Only the condemned were silent and composed. Their only uttered words were of encouragement and endearment. Not long had they to wait. The torch was applied, and the light wood on the outer rim of the pyre began to redden with flame, when a noise was heard of heavy footsteps approaching, and soon Archer came out of the forest, leading Miss Ashby. In a moment he comprehended the whole proceeding.

"Devils, what would you do?" he yelled. "Burn a woman?" and in an instant he scattered the dry material, and the fire was extinguished. Minnie was released, but Harry still remained bound.

"Oh! my brother, my brother," cried Gracie, as she sprung to his arms. "I did not dream that you were here! This is dreadful!"

"Yes, and Minnie, too," replied Harry. Miss Ashby turned,

and those two pure hearts were beating close together, while the arms were twined, each around the other's neck.

"Yes," said Archer, "I should judge Minnie *had* been here." He pointed to the body of Conanchet. "But I do not regret his death, and I am glad Miss Ashby has found a brother here. He will persuade her to become my wife, and then we will all be friends."

"What!" cried Harry, indignation flashing in his eyes, "my sister become *your* wife!"

"And why not?" said Archer, coolly.

"I would sooner see her burnt beside me at this stake."

"Miss Ashby, do you indorse your brother's sentiments?" asked Archer.

"Most heartily, thou vilest of the human race!" answered Gracie.

"Oh! it's all the same to me," returned Archer. "I don't intend to burn *you* at the stake. Oh! no. My wife you shall be, and all the power of man combined can not prevent it." Then turning to the Indians, Archer said:

"Do as you like. Go on with the burning if you wish. But let it be the man, and no woman."

The savages, ever ready to torture their victim, began to replace the fagots around the doomed man.

"Oh! my God, Harry," cried Grace, "tell me what to do—how to act to avoid this dreadful fate!"

"Act as *my* sister—as my father's daughter—as Grace Ashby *should* act! Heaven will *not* desert you, even if it does me!"

"And Heaven does not desert you, dear Harry," cried Minnie. "Hear that! Hear that! Oh! God be praised—it is the *silver bugle*! Friends are near!"

True. Echoing through the forest and across the lake came the welcome bugle-blast which sent such joy through the hearts of our captives as they had never felt before. It also struck terror to the soul of Archer. He started back and gazed wildly around him.

In a moment more the panic-stricken Indians came dashing within their circle, and only after gaining one of their works turned to act on the defensive. But all in vain. The soldiers followed in an instant, and, springing into the defenses, the combat was a short but bloody one.

Minneapolis had taken advantage of the confusion, to release her lover from the thongs which bound him.

Among the first to enter the circle was Lieutenant Lindell. He sprung to the side of Miss Ashby, and they met as only those who love and have been thus parted can meet.

Archer saw this, and the fires of hate roused him. He sprung like a tiger upon Lindell. But Hill, who had just staggered from the fort, badly wounded, anticipated the action of Archer. He summoned his remaining strength, and, springing upon the villain, he drove his dagger into his breast, and Archer, the renegade, rolled to the earth a corpse.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN quiet was restored our friends began to collect together. Oh, what a happy group, as they reclined upon the bank of that beautiful lake. Not perfectly happy—such happiness is not for mortals—still happy, being thus united.

Upon the grassy lawn sat Minnie and Harry, the sweet girl gazing into his face, and smiling through her tears. Near them was Lieutenant Lindell and Grace Ashby, none the less happy. Dawson was lying upon the ground, a short distance off, and near him were Billings and Joe Schryer.

A little aside from these sat Neamata, with the head of Hill reclining upon her lap. She was, or appeared to be, entirely absorbed in him, bathing his brow with cooling water, and trying to stop the blood which gushed from the wound in his breast. At length she started up, and cried:

"Where is Howard? Why is he not here?"

"He is here, Neamata," replied Captain Warren, as he came up at that moment.

When Neamata heard the voice of Warren, she sprung toward him, but a wild scream escaped her as she exclaimed:

"Oh, Howard, you are wounded too. The blood is streaming down your face. Tell me that you are not badly hurt!"

"I am not hurt at all, Neamata," replied Warren. "It is simply a scratch, and not a wound. But Mr. Hill is hurt; is it dangerous?"

"I fear so. Hush! don't tell him he is dying, but I think he is."

"Friends," said Captain Howard Warren, as he stepped within their circle, "I must claim your attention for a short time. You may think it strange that I should speak upon such a subject, at such a time, while men are dying around me. But you will learn my motive." Then turning to Neamata, he asked:

"Neamata, do you still love me and wish to become my wife?"

"Oh, yes, Howard, yes—your Christian wife."

"So you shall be, dear Neamata. Were I a king I would wed you. But had you not better ask your father?" Warren pointed to the heavens, as if he meant her father there.

"I have asked him often," replied the child of nature.

"Ask him now," said Warren.

Neamata knelt upon the ground, and, folding her hands over her breast, she raised her eyes upward. Oh, what a picture! Nature, wearing the human form, communing with its God. There was a deathly silence. At length she turned her eyes upon Warren, and said:

"He is willing. My heart tells me so."

"Mr. Hill," said Warren, as he approached the dying man, "have you strength to listen to me?"

"Yes."

"I will be brief," continued Warren. "I formerly resided in Philadelphia. You knew my father, Joseph Warren."

"Yes, well."

"Do not speak, but listen. Shortly after your removal to the West, having lost all you possessed in the world, a villain by the name of Sandford ruined my father, robbing him of every penny he owned. It broke his heart, and in six months he died. My mother soon followed, and I was left alone in the world—alone and penniless. I resolved to try my fortune in the West. I connected myself with a party of traders, and came to the wilds of Wisconsin. One evening, while seeking shelter, we were attacked by a party of Indians. Plunder

was their object. I know not the fate of my friends, but I escaped. I was so young, being only ten years of age at the time, that I escaped their notice. Well, I started for the nearest point where I supposed assistance could be gained. But oh, what a sight met my gaze upon arriving at the place I sought. The dwelling of a poor settler was in flames, and a party of Indians were butchering his family. A little child, in her fright, had crawled to a considerable distance from the house. I saw the child; I seized it in my arms and ran. A savage struck at me as I passed him, but only slightly wounded the child upon the hand."

"Oh, I remember it now," cried Neamata; "I am that child. Here is the scar."

"Let no one speak until I have finished," said Warren. "I had not gone far before I was seized. I expected death, but we were both spared. We were conveyed to an Indian village near the head of the Des Moines river. Here we were kept for two years. I became a drudge, while the child was taught the Indian mode of life. At length I was taken from her. I did not know who her parents were, but I knew *where* they had resided. During my stay with her I sought, by every means, to counteract the influence of the savages. While in Philadelphia I was presented with an elegant silver bugle. It was my delight, and I retained it even in my captivity. This the Indians permitted me to do, because they liked the music I gave them. But the little girl also conceived a passion for the instrument, and when I was parted from her I gave her the bugle. For several more years I was held a captive, but at last escaped. I sought for my child, but could get no tidings of her, and gave her up as dead.

"About two months since I learned that the man who robbed my father was a prisoner at Mirror lake. The Indians in that section did not know, or had forgotten me, and I determined to go there, and see if I could not compel Sandford to disgorge some of his ill-gotten gains. I found, upon my arrival, that for some offense he had been burned at the stake. But my journey was not a fruitless one, for on my way I met Neamata, the child I had saved.

"My story is nearly finished," continued Howard. "I knew that her father still lived. I sought him. Through

trouble I have brought him *here*! Hill, would you learn more?"

"Oh, God, yes; tell me—tell me!"

"Neamata," cried Warren, pointing to Hill, "*ask your father if you can become my wife!*"

"What!" "Father!" "My child!" shrieked both Hill and Neamata in a breath.

"The burning building, the massacre, was in the 'Bloody Valley,' and the child I saved is *your own daughter*, the one who was five years of age at that time, whom you supposed lost in the flames."

With a wild cry Neamata, as we have called her, sprung to her father's arms. Hill raised himself with much difficulty, and laid his hand upon the head of his long-lost child. Then calling to Warren, he said:

"Warren, come near me—bend low. I die content; be to her a true husband, as you have been friend. Kiss me, child. I—I—" and the poor hunchback had departed to that bright land where death never comes.

A few more words will finish our story. The arrival of General Pope at St. Paul, and the soldiers sent to protect the frontier, soon restored quiet. Our friends returned to their respective homes.

The Ashby family, at the earnest solicitation of Warren, accompanied him to Philadelphia. Grace Ashby has become Mrs. Lindell, and for the loss of that name, another has taken it: Minneapolis is now called Mrs. Ashby.

The SILVER BUGLE is as happy as can be, and her love for Howard Warren has grown in strength and purity. She is his Christian wife.

THE END.

